Zantei, Koibito

tentatively Lovers

Scanned by Kaleidel

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TOHKO AKIBA PRESENTS

Zantei, Koibito

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SAKAMOTO TATSUHISA, 34 YEARS OLD. MANAGER OF SECTION THREE OF THE BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT OF A MAJOR CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS COMPANY.
HIS SUBORDINATES TRUST HIM AND HE'S A HOT-SHOT AT WORK, BUT DESPITE WHAT YOU MIGHT THINK AT FIRST, HE'S CRUDE AND LOUD.
HE'S ALSO ONCE-DIVORCED.
HE'S FOND OF HIS BEER AND SHOCHU*. HE'S MY SUPERIOR AT WORK...
...AND ALSO...

T/N: A Japanese liquor similar to vodka.

Zantei, Koibito #1

TOHKO AKIBA PRESENTS

KURA-HASHI-KUN!
HOW ARE YOU DOING ON THE SUMMARY I ASKED YOU FOR EARLIER?
IT'S DONE
OH, THANKS!
PERFECT! JUST WHAT I'D EXPECT FROM YOU!
YEAH, THANKS
Praise is wasted on him.
JUST AS ALWAYS, YOU'RE ALMOST TOO PERFECT
ARE YOU COMPLI-MENTING ME?
I SUPPOSE YOU'D NEVER THINK YOU ONLY STARTED HERE THREE YEARS AGO.
WELL, GIVEN THAT SAKAMOTO-SAN DID TAKE YOU UNDER HIS WING IT'S ONLY TO BE EXPECTED
STILL, IT'S SURPRISING HOW DIFFERENT YOU ARE
HEY, TAKEMURA!
C'MERE A MOMENT!
waggle

Oooh....
TOKUMA LTD. IS GOING TO MAKE A MOVE ON THE REINFORCED CONCRETE HIGH RISE CONSTRUCTION PROJECT IN ROPPONGI
GO AND MAKE ANOTHER PUSH FOR THE FC-2000!
WHAT IS IT, MANAGER?
I WAS JUST ABOUT TO HEAD OUT ON MY ROUNDS—
HUH? I JUST WENT YESTERDAY, AND THEY BARELY EVEN GAVE ME THE TIME OF DAY!
THE MANAGER ON SITE LEAKED ME THE INFO ON THE SLY
VICTORY GOES TO THE FIRST ONE THERE, SO HURRY UP AND GO!
THWACK
OW!
IT'S GREAT TO HAVE A BOSS LIKE THAT.
AND THANKS TO HIM, WE ALWAYS BEAT THE COMPETITION!
working hard
pat pat
BEFORE YOU EVEN KNOW IT, HE'S GOT THE WORKERS ON SITE IN HIS POCKET AND IS BRINGING IN RESULTS HAND OVER HAND.
AND THERE'S SAKAMOTO-SAN'S MAGIC.

YOU'RE THE TYPE TO GET INTO SOMETHING ONLY AFTER YOU'VE EXAMINED ALL THE NITTY-GRITTY DETAILS, AREN'T YOU, KURAHASHI?
whoops!
WELL? HOW IS IT, WORKING UNDER HIM?
QUICK ON HIS FEET, ISN'T HE!
AND HE STILL GOES AROUND TO ALL THE SITES HE'S WORKED WITH, EVEN AFTER HE WAS PROMOTED.
THERE HAVE BEEN TIMES WHEN HE'S GOTTEN TO NEW BUSINESSES AHEAD OF ME.
That totem pole.
OOPS! KNOCKED IT OVER.
...THAT'S RIGHT. I'M ALWAYS SURPRISED BY THE SCOPE OF HIS ABILITY.
WELL ..
I DO RESPECT HIM, YOU KNOW?
fwump
thump thump
HIS SKILL IS CERTAIN AND RELIABLE ...
rustle
OH?

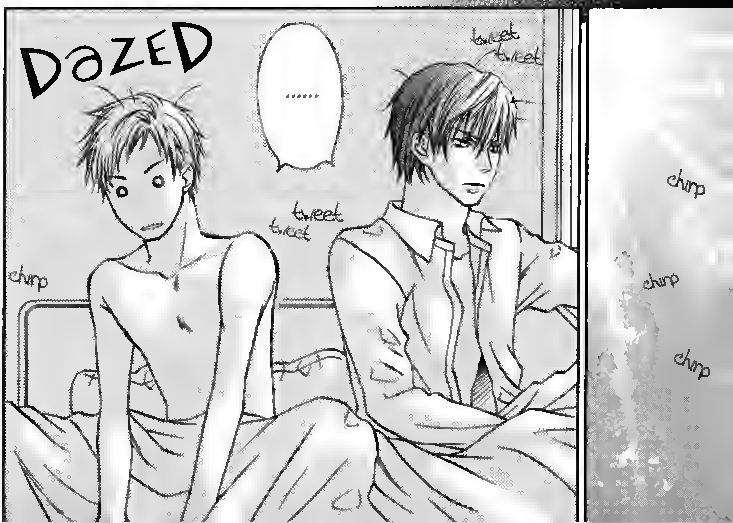
WHY DON'T YOU CLEAN OFF YOUR DESKTOP A BIT?
OH!
MY BAD, KURAHASHI
grin
MY BELOVED PUPIL.
IT'S YOUR DESK, I DON'T MIND
whisper
...WHAT ABOUT TONIGHT?
pat
pat
HUH?
UH... HMM.
SURE. THE USUAL PLACE, EIGHT O'CLOCK?
ALL RIGHT.
IT ALL STARTED AT A DRINK-ING PARTY FOR OUR SECTION TWO MONTHS AGO.

Zzzz...
AW, HELL...
SAKAMOTO-SAN'S COMPLETELY WASTED.
WHO LET HIM DRINK THIS MUCH?
THERE WAS SOMEONE, RIGHT?
DOES ANYONE ELSE LIVE OUT TOWARDS ITABASHI?
HE LIVES IN ITABASHI, RIGHT?
Tch
...THE HELL... WHY DO I HAVE TO HAUL THIS OLD, THIRTY-SOMETHING MAN AROUND?
...YOUR KEY, MANAGER, WHERE'S YOUR KEY?!
click
PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER!

THERE WE GO
THUMP
SO HE LIVES ALONE HUH...
So big!
OH YEAH, HE'S DIVORCED, ISN'T HE.
WELL, HE SHOULD BE FINE IF I LEAVE HIM ALONE!
...HONESTLY.
sigh
WHEN HE SHUTS UP, HE'S GREAT AT WHAT HE DOES, AND HE LOOKS PLENTY RESPECTABLE.
...MM...
I MEAN...
HIS EYELASHES ARE WAY TOO LONG FOR A MAN HIS AGE...
OH, ARE YOU AWAKE? I'M GOING TO HEAD HOME ...
roll
HMM?

scramble
HOLD IT— MANAGER, LET GO OF ME!
CUT IT OUT ALREADY, PLEASE! YOU'RE NOT A CHILD, YOU CAN...
—LY.
HUH?!
scramble
CLING
WHOA!
DON'T LEAVE...
BUT I'M
LONELY
HEY KURASHI!!!
WOW, HE'S SERIOUSLY DRUNK...
GRAB
?
WHAA?!
THUD

...HOLD ON A...
So strong!
MANA-GER!
WHAT ARE ..?!
MANA-GER...!


DAZED
.....
tweet tweet
tweet tweet
chirp
chirp
chirp
chirp

...I JUST MANAGED TO AVOID BEING ON THE BOTTOM, BUT STILL...
Alcohol is scary! Seriously scary!
HE'S STILL A THIRTY-SOMETHING MAN...
Sigh
...KURAHASHI.
YES?
I'M JUST GONNA ASK YOU ONE THING. WE...
DID IT. DIDN'T WE?
Straight face
GRIP
Old man!
...NO, WE DIDN'T.
THIS IS WHAT I HATE ABOUT HIM...
OH, COME ON. YOU'RE LYING. MY ASS IS KILLING ME.
TO BE SPECIFIC, MY—
WE DID IT.
REALLY... WELL, I DID HAVE A HUNCH ABOUT IT.
AND I'M SINGLE RIGHT NOW, I SUPPOSE I CAN DO THIS.
...?
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

WELL, KURAHASHI,
YOU'RE IN LOVE WITH ME OR SOMETHING, RIGHT?
I'VE BEEN WONDERING ABOUT IT FOR A WHILE, ACTUALLY. YOU'RE ALWAYS PERFECTLY SOCIABLE WITH EVERYONE ELSE, BUT THERE WAS SOMETHING DIFFERENT ABOUT YOUR ATTITUDE WHEN IT CAME TO ME, RIGHT?
Excuse Me?
I FIGURED YOU EITHER DIDN'T LIKE ME OR HAD A THING FOR ME.
BUT I NEVER IMAGINED THAT YOU WERE SO INTO ME THAT YOU'D POUNCE ON ME WHEN I WAS DRUNK
It's the first, the first!
NO, WAIT, MANAGER, YOU. . .
WELL, YOU COULD CONSIDER THIS AN OPPORTUNITY IN ITS OWN WAY.
huff

...AND THUS...
WELL, LET'S GET ALONG AND ENJOY OURSELVES, RIGHT?
DUE TO HIM, HIS ABSURDLY POSITIVE OUTLOOK SO PECULIAR TO BUSINESS, AND THAT CRAZY IDEA HE'S GOT IN HIS HEAD,
THIS INEXPLICABLE, INCOMPREHENSIBLE RELATIONSHIP IS STILL CONTINUING...
...
CANCELLED AGAIN, HUH.
KURAHASHI! THE MEETING'S STARTING!
TITLE: Sorry!
I got stuck with going with Murata, so I'm going to have to cancel tonight I won't be at the meeting either make sure to tell everyone
From: Honey

Ugh!
AGAIN? TALK ABOUT SPARTAN!
HE'S ACCOMPANYING ONE OF THE NEW HIRES, MURATA.
HE WON'T BE BACK TO THE OFFICE TODAY.
RATTLE
RATTLE
HUH? ISN'T THE MANAGER GOING TO BE HERE?
SAKAMOTO-SAN'S REALLY STUCK ON MURATA LATELY, ISN'T HE?
IS IT BECAUSE MURATA'S OUR FIRST NEW HIRE IN THREE YEARS?
HE WAS PRETTY INDIFFERENT WHEN KURAHASHI JOINED, THOUGH.
WELL, KURAHASHI'S IN A CLASS OF HIS OWN!
BUT STILL, THE MANAGER IS AMAZING, BEING ABLE TO MAKE ALL THOSE SALES EVEN WHILE RUNNING AROUND WATCHING AFTER EVERYONE ELSE.
REMEMBER, THIS IS THE GUY WHO BECAME ONE OF OUR TOP SELLERS IN SIX MONTHS
OH, PLEASE, IT WASN'T LIKE THAT AT ALL.
SAKAMOTO-SAN DIDN'T HAVE TO HELP HIM ONE-ON-ONE WITH EVERY LITTLE THING

Oh, dear
I HEARD THEY GOT DIVORCED BECAUSE OF SOME DISCUSSION ABOUT HER MOVING ABROAD FOR WORK
It's pretty much out in the open.
OHH?
AND HE WORKS OVERTIME PRACTICALLY EVERY DAY.
I FEEL SORRY FOR HIS WIFE... WAIT, HE DOESN'T HAVE ONE ANYMORE, THAT'S RIGHT.
GETTING DIVORCED JUST BECAUSE OF THAT...
DOESN'T HE GET LONELY...?
WELL, EVEN THOUGH IT WAS A MISUNDERSTANDING OF HIS, HE DID SAY THAT HE WAS LONELY AND STARTED GOING OUT WITH ME.
I'M SURE HE MISSES BEING WITH OTHER PEOPLE
.....
EVEN SOMEONE AS CRASS AS HE IS...
"DON'T LEAVE."

"I'M LONELY."
gasp
...BEING THE CASE
SEE TO IT THAT WE HIT THIS MONTH'S QUOTA ON THE BACK-UP PRODUCT!
All right
chatter
THAT'S ALL!
WHAT AM I THINKING ABOUT, IN THE MIDDLE OF A MEETING?
THAT'S RIGHT. I DIDN'T LIKE HIM LIKE THAT IN THE FIRST PLACE.
THIS IS ALL BECAUSE OF SOME MISUNDERSTANDING OF HIS.

YOU CAN'T DO THIS WEEKEND, EITHER?
EVEN IF HE JUST ACCEPTED ME BECAUSE HE'S LONELY,
THERE'S NOTHING TO BE FEELING HURT OVER...
SORRY!
I WAS INVITED TO GOLF WHEN I WAS TAKING MURATA ON HIS ROUNDS.
I CAN'T REFUSE
HUH?
I'LL LIVE UP TO YOUR EXPECTATIONS.
BUT I'LL MAKE UP FOR IT SOON ENOUGH!
—ALL RIGHT.
YOU NEVER ACTED WET BEHIND THE EARS, SO IT'S A STRANGE FEELING. HAVEN'T HAD TO DEAL WITH IT FOR YEARS.
AH, WELL, PRETTY MIDDLE OF THE ROAD— NEW HIRE, AFTER ALL.
—HOW'S MURATA DOING?
AND BY "EXPECTATIONS" YOU MEAN—?

WELL EXCUSE ME FOR NOT BEING CHARMING.
heh
grin
WELL, I'LL RAISE HIM WITH GREAT CARE.
UNLIKE YOU, HIS WORK HAS PLENTY ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT, BUT HE DOES HAVE SOME CHARM.
BUT WHILE HE SAYS STUFF LIKE THAT...
aha ha ha
THAT'S NOT REALLY HELPING, YOU KNOW.
BESIDES, YOU'RE PLENTY INTERESTING IN YOUR OWN WAY.
THAT'S FINE TOO— SAVES ME A LOT OF TIME AND ENERGY.
KURA-HASHI-KUN! ♡
THOUGH IF IT WERE ONLY A MATTER OF FRUSTRA-TION...
BETWEEN PLAYING BABYSITTER TO THE NEW HIRES AND OVERTIME WORK, HE DOESN'T HAVE TIME FOR ANYTHING MORE THAN A QUICK KISS AFTER A DRINK OR TWO.
WE'VE BARELY EVEN SEEN EACH OTHER OUTSIDE OF WORK FOR A MONTH.

...AH...
SORRY.
kya
kya
IT LOOKS LIKE YOUR EVENINGS HAVE BEEN PRETTY OPEN LATELY.
WON'T YOU GO DRINKING WITH US TONIGHT?
There are plenty of other options, sue.
Awww that's too sad!
But he really is cool!
I'M AFRAID I'M BUSY THIS WEEK COULD YOU INVITE ME ANOTHER TIME?
SMILE
TITLE Sorry!
Sorry (again) but this week is dorm the drain too I m not sure about next month yet so I ll get in touch with you later
Sorry to do this all the
ough cough
CLICK
MY WORK IS ALL SMOOTH SAILING, THANKS FOR ASKING!
That weir character tales me out!
Oh man
.....
AGAIN?

NO, NOT AT ALL. THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONSTANT PATRONAGE, PRESIDENT ITOU!
SORRY FOR MAKING YOU WAIT, NISHIJIMA-SAN
Company name.
HOW ARE THINGS PROCEEDING?
OH, THE PRODUCTS YOU BROUGHT LAST TIME ARE SO GREAT!
WE'LL BE ABLE TO GO EVEN FASTER NEXT TIME WITH THAT!
CLICK
IF I GET THE REGULAR ORDER FROM THIS COMPANY, THEN I'VE FULFILLED THIS MONTH'S QUOTA.
SO INDUSTRIOUS OF ME, EVEN WHEN ABANDONED. HOW PATHETIC.
OH, YES, N-20.
WE'RE PLANNING ON USING A LARGE AMOUNT NEXT MONTH. IS THERE A GOOD REPLACEMENT?
IS IT TRUE THAT CEMENT N-20 IS OUT OF STOCK RIGHT NOW?
"JUST AS ALWAYS, YOU'RE ALMOST TOO PERFECT."
"SAKAMOTO-SAN DIDN'T HAVE TO HELP HIM ONE-ON-ONE WITH EVERY LITTLE THING."
THAT WOULD BE...

"UNLIKE YOU, HIS WORK HAS PLENTY ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT, BUT HE DOES HAVE SOME CHARM."
...
?
NISHIJIMA-SAN?
I'M VERY SORRY, PRESIDENT
Smile
THE TRUTH IS...
HUH? GO WITH YOU TO A CUSTOMER?
YES I'M AFRAID I'M HAVING SOME TROUBLE MEETING THIS MONTH'S QUOTA...
I DON'T MIND, BUT...
COULD I ASK FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE?
ME? WITH YOU?

No way! I can't!
Buck up already!
.....
HUH?!
ALL RIGHT, MURATA, YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN THIS WEEK
WELL, IT'S GOTTA BE PRETTY BIG TO MAKE YOU SAY SOMETHING LIKE THAT
OOOH, NO CEMENT ORDER FROM ITOU CONSTRUCTION THIS TIME
THEY'RE BIG, SO MISSING AN ORDER FROM THEM LEAVES A PRETTY BIG DENT.
..YES.
WHICH ONE?
rustle
Huh? RIGHT NOW?
THEN LET'S HEAD OUT YOUR ROUNDS
fwip
OH, RIGHT THE N-20 IS OUT OF STOCK. THE E SERIES IS A NO-GO, HUH?
ALL RIGHT!
rattle
THEY NORMALLY ORDER N-20, BUT THE REPLACEMENT E-20 DOESN'T HAVE THE COAGULATION STRENGTH THEY NEED

WITH THIS, FOR THESE THREE DAYS,
—AH.
YES...
YOUR QUOTA'S ON THE LINE, RIGHT?
I CAN SPEND TIME WITH HIM...

WHAT ARE YOU PULLING HERE?
thwap

...WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?
DON'T EVEN TRY THE ORDER FROM ITOU CONSTRUCTION
REPLACING THEIR ORDER WITH E-20 WOULD HAVE FIT THEIR NEEDS FOR THEIR LATEST PROJECT, BUT YOU SAID THERE WAS NO REPLACEMENT FOR N-20...
I GOT A CALL FROM THEM YESTERDAY
I THOUGHT IT WAS STRANGE...
FOR ALL THAT YOU SAID THE QUOTA WAS ON THE LINE, YOU DIDN'T LOOK THE SLIGHTEST BIT PANICKED
YOU COULD HAVE SOLD WHY DIDN'T YOU?
...
YUKI-CHAN, I'M BORROWING THIS ROOM
AH, YES, SIR!
...COME WITH ME A MOMENT.
I'm kind of worried
Kurahashi-kun taken away to be lectured!
Wh-oa- never thought I'd see that happen

FWAP
DON'T SCREW AROUND WITH YOUR WORK LIKE THIS, KURAHASHI!
I THOUGHT YOUR PRIDE ENSURED THAT YOU PROPERLY DID WHAT YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO DO
DO YOU HAVE AN EXPLANATION FOR THIS THAT YOU CAN'T SHARE?
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU THINKING?
...THERE'S NO WAY I COULD TELL YOU
NOTHING, HUH
KURA-HASHI

AH—
THAT I SET THIS ALL UP BECAUSE I WANTED TO BE WITH YOU...
DON'T DISAPPOINT ME LIKE THIS I...
AM KEEPING MYSELF FROM SEEING YOU IN ORDER TO GET THIS WORK DONE
SO YOU'D BETTER TAKE YOUR JOB SERIOUSLY, TOO!

I'm still young! I'm raring to go at it
Tap Tap
NO WAY IT'S EASY TO DEAL WITH
OF COURSE THIS MAKES A MONTH THAT I'VE BARELY BEEN ABLE TO SEE THE GUY I'M IN LOVE WITH
KEEPING YOURSELF FROM SEEING ME?
What's with that expression? The ladies in the office would cry if they saw.
Awoo
I have things my own way
AS IF I'D SLEEP WITH A BIG GUY LIKE YOU IF I WEREN'T
YOUR DETERMINATION NOT TO LOSE IS LIKE WATCHING YOU THRASH ABOUT BENEATH THE WATER TO STAY AFLOAT, BUT NOT SHOW IT ON THE SURFACE. IT'S RATHER AMUSING. I LOVE IT.
YOU'RE IN LOVE WITH ME MANAGER?
BLUSH
SLUMP
WHAT?

WHAT, KURAHASHI, YOU WERE JUST SULKING?
LONELY?
YOU SHOULD'VE JUST COME OUT AND SAID IT INSTEAD OF PULLING CHEAP TRICKS LIKE THAT
THERE'S NO WAY I COULD HAVE SAID THAT.
YEAH, I MIGHT NOT BE GOING OUT WITH YOU IF YOU COULD
Crude and tasteless as ever
Crude and tasteless as ever
.....
Whoa.
Jump
Standing straight

I'M VERY SORRY ABOUT ALL THIS I WAS RASH AND THOUGHTLESS.
BOW
I'LL GO APOLOGIZE TO PRESIDENT ITOU TOMORROW AND I'LL COME BACK WITH AN ORDER FROM THEM.
SURE THING.
DO IT RIGHT, NOW.
WELL, I SUPPOSE IT'S NOT BAD SEEING YOU ALL SWEET AND DOCILE EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE.
My ex-wife was pretty determined not to lose too, but the result of her stupid stubbornness was her going abroad alone.
IT ALL BEGAN WITH A SPIRIT OF OPPOSITION AND A MISUNDERSTANDING.
BUT HE SAYS HE LIKES MY DETERMINATION NOT TO LOSE.

IF THAT'S THE CASE...
hmph
...WELL THEN, NEXT TIME...
REALLY? I SEE.

...YOU SEEM HAPPY.
WELL, I GOT TO SEE YOU ACTING CUTE FOR ONCE.

Hmm
OH?
clatter
I...
...WILL TAKE THE LIBERTY OF SEEING YOU AS ADORABLE AS YOU WERE THAT NIGHT!
THEN I CAN'T EVER LOSE AGAIN...
KURA-HASHI.

THEY HAD BEEN VACILLATING A BIT, SO WHEN THE N-20 WENT OUT OF STOCK, I TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO RECOMMEND THE TOP-QUALITY S SERIES.
Of course, he said nothing about the substitute product.
IT WAS A QUICK DECISION
ISN'T THE UNIT PRICE ON THIS E-20 A BIT STEEP?
ABOUT PRESIDENT ITOU...
Forget the quota, this suits everyone else.
OH, YES
Whoa!
Wow, Kurahashi!
IT TURNED OUT ALL RIGHT IN THE END,
YOU KNOW YOU LIKE IT
THE FIRST VICTORY.
...NOT CUTE AT ALL..
Seeing you like this...

Zantei, Koibito

tentatively Lovers

Scanned by Kaleidel

Translated by Dantalion

Edited by Cubist

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Zantei, Koibito
#2
TOHKO AKIBA PRESENTS

TOHKO AKIBA PRESENTS

Zantei, Kolbito

MY LOVER IS NOT TO BE TAKEN LIGHTLY.
...SAKAMOTO-SAN...
KURAHASHI...
TODAY, FOR SURE...
TODAY'S A GO!!
YEAH...
click
WHAM
BLINK
ALL RIGHT...

IF I DON'T DO THINGS THE MOMENT I REMEMBER, I'LL FORGET ALL OVER AGAIN
YOU CAN TURN IT IN FIRST THING IN THE MORNING, RIGHT?
I'll finish it right up and then we can go back to what we were doing, so just you wait.
SHIT, I FORGOT THE SUMMARY FOR THE MEETING!
WHAT WAS THAT FOR, ALL OF A SUDDEN?!
THEN IT'S ALL GOOD
click click
I'VE FINISHED EVERYTHING DOWN TO THE ACCOUNT BALANCING.
sulking in the corner
THIS IS SAKAMOTO TATSUHISA, 34 YEARS OLD, A SECTION MANAGER OF THE BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT OF A MAJOR CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS COMPANY.
HE'S MY SUPERIOR AT WORK... AND ALSO...
sniff sniff
... AND IN THE END,
TODAY, TOO, ENDS WITHOUT SEEING HIM ACT ALL ADORABLE.
Getting the wood? What's that? Can you eat it?

Meeting Room
In Use
ALL RIGHT. SALES RESULTS FOR LAST WEEK ARE IN.
AT THE MOMENT... MY LOVER.
A FEW OF YOU WILL BE IN TROUBLE IF YOU KEEP IT UP AT THIS RATE
YUAKI, TRY HITTING UP SOME SMALLER COMPANIES.
Ah- okay.
TAKEMURA! CUT THE NUMBER OF BREAKS YOU TAKE AND SPEND THAT TIME OUT MAKING SALES!
YES, SIR!
TSUJI, YOU'RE DOING WELL THIS MONTH KEEP IT UP AND MAKE UP FOR LAST MONTH
WILL DO!
- AND KURA-HASHI-

MANAGER, KURAHASHI'S ALREADY CLEARED HIS QUOTA
YES?
KURAHASHI, DON'T YOU MEET WITH THE CHAIR OF MORIO CONSTRUCTION?
THERE SHOULD BE NO COMPLAINTS THIS MONTH!
SO IT SEEMS THEY'RE THE ONLY COMPANY ON YOUR LIST THAT HASN'T IMPROVED IN THE LAST HALF YEAR.
Hmm
BUT... I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO GET A TIME TO MAKE MY PITCH TO THEIR PEOPLE ON SITE
AH, WELL, WE'RE DOING VERY WELL BY THE CHAIR OF MORIO CONSTRUCTION
OH, SHUT UP. YOU ALWAYS NEED TO HAVE AMBITION FOR MORE!
RIGHT, KURAHASHI?!
WITH THOSE STANDARDS, WE MIGHT AS WELL BE USELESS!
Whoa!
Where are we, Sasaki?
...TALK ABOUT TRIVIAL..

WE MAY BE LOVERS, BUT WE ARE STILL BOSS AND SUBORDI-NATE.
HE SAYS HE LIKES MY DETERMINATION, AND SOMETIMES HE GIVES ME HURDLES TO JUMP, AS THOUGH TO ASK IF I CAN KEEP UP.
Smile
...THAT'S RIGHT.
GRIN
JUST LOOK AT THAT SMILE!
IS THAT THE SMILE YOU SHOW YOUR LOVER?!
NOW YOU'RE TALKING.
I'LL GIVE YOU SOME SURE-FIRE TIPS LATER.
I DON'T EVEN WANT TO THINK ABOUT IT, BUT...
WHAT'S UP WITH THAT LACK OF EMO-TION?
...I WAS SURPRISED AT HOW BLASE HE WAS WHEN HE SAID HE LOVED ME...

...ASIDE FROM WHEN WE'RE IN BED, DOESN'T HE SHOW THE EXACT SAME FACE TO EVERYONE ELSE AS HE DOES TO ME?
.....
I'D BE SIGHING, TOO YOU SAW THE RESULTS HE'S BEEN PUTTING OUT, AND THE MANAGER STILL ISN'T SATISFIED?
HEY, KURAHASHI, WHAT'S THAT SIGH FOR? HOW UNUSUAL FOR YOU.
CRAP, I'M REALLY STARTING TO THINK THAT.
sigh
AND YOUR NUMBERS ARE HIGH ENOUGH TO PUT BLACK-MARKET LOAN INTEREST RATES TO SHAME.
YOU THINK YOU CAN SWING SOMETHING WITH MORIO CONSTRUCTION?

IT MAY BE A BIT DIFFICULT
IT SEEMS LIKE THEY'VE BEEN WORKING AT A FEVER PITCH AT QUITE A FEW SITES FOR A WHILE NOW,
SO I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO GET THEM TO SPARE THE TIME FOR ME.
AND IF THERE'S ANYTHING I WANT TO AVOID, IT'S PUSHING THEM HARD ENOUGH THAT THEY THINK I'M MORE OF A NUISANCE THAN I'M WORTH
FIGURES. IT'S NOT LIKE THEY'RE NOT BUYING.
THE ONLY TARGETS LEFT ARE THE BUSIEST SITES, HUH?
HOW WERE THE MANAGER'S SO-CALLED SUREFIRE TIPS?
...A BIT DICEY, TO BE HONEST
...NO. TO THE CONTRARY.
WHAT, TOO COMPLICATED?
IT'S SO SIMPLE THAT IT'S ACTUALLY A BIT MYSTERIOUS

HAVE YOU SEEN THIS?!
KURAHASHI'S SALES AT MORIO CONSTRUCTION ARE UP 25%!!
SIMPLE?
DON!!

IT'S THE "GREAT RICE BALL STRATEGY" (BY SAKAMOTO).
THAT'S RIGHT.
DON'T TELL ME IT WAS THOSE SUREFIRE TIPS...?
THESE ARE YOUR RESULTS IN THREE MONTHS?!
WHOA, SERIOUSLY? THAT'S INSANE.
WHY ARE YOU BRAGGING, MANAGER?
What're these TV shopping sales results coming from?

"AND BRING SOME FOR YOURSELF, TOO, SEPARATELY FROM THE REST, AND GO JUST BEFORE LUNCH AND MAKE SURE YOU KEEP IT UP FOR A WHILE."
"FROM NOW ON, WHEN YOU GO ON SITE, DON'T BRING SWEETS, BRING RICE BALLS."
"DOESN'T MATTER WHAT'S ON THE INSIDE, JUST MAKE SURE THE RICE IS GOOD."
THE IMPORTANT THING HERE IS THAT TIME SPENT TALKING TO THE PEOPLE ON SITE IS TIME AVAILABLE TO MAKE A PITCH.
THEY'LL START EATING RICE BALLS THE MOMENT LUNCH HOUR ROLLS AROUND, RIGHT?
Plus who doesn't like rice balls?
ARE RICE BALLS REALLY THAT MOVING?
?
IT ISN'T AN ISSUE OF FOOD QUALITY HERE
Stupid
Please stop calling me stupid
AH, I SEE! IT'S AN EXCUSE TO MINGLE WITH THEM DURING LUNCH-TIME!
NO ONE'S GOING TO REFUSE ONCE THEY'VE ACCEPTED LUNCH FROM YOU.
AND THEN YOU ASK IF YOU CAN EAT WITH THEM AND VERY DELIBERATELY PULL OUT YOUR OWN LUNCH

HEY.
HE'S NOT JUST A DRUNK-ARD, IS HE...
WOW, I JUST REMEMBERED THAT SAKAMOTO-SAN REALLY IS GOOD AT WHAT HE DOES.
And once small talk gets started you can get pretty close to them.
AFTER THAT IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF HOW WELL YOU CAN GATHER INFORMATION AND SLIP IN A FEW WORDS ABOUT YOUR OWN PRODUCT.
THAT'S WHERE KURAHASHI CAN REALLY STRUT HIS STUFF.
...THOUGH THAT IDEA REALLY IS LIKE HIM.
IT'S A METHOD I NEVER WOULD HAVE COME UP WITH MYSELF.
The type to use basic proven methods to make his capture.
WHAT?
Stare
I DON'T FEEL LIKE MY OWN WAY OF DOING THINGS IS INFERIOR.
AND IT'S NOT THAT I DON'T HAVE CONFI-DENCE IN MYSELF, EITHER.
IT'S NOTHING IT'S JUST THAT THESE RESULTS ARE THANKS TO YOU.
I WAS JUST THINKING THAT YOU REALLY ARE AMAZING.

Even if you set them to share the same time it doesn't mean anything if you can't sell
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? YOU'RE PLENTY AMAZING YOURSELF, KURAHASHI
HEY.
ISN'T THAT RIGHT, MANAGER?
SMILE
YEAH
THANK YOU.
THAT'S RIGHT. I'M EMBODYING THE KIND OF DETERMINED SUBORDINATE YOU LIKE SO WELL THAT I IMPRESS EVEN MYSELF.
TO TELL THE TRUTH, KURAHASHI, YOU'VE GONE ABOVE AND BEYOND THE EXPECTATIONS I HAD FOR YOU
IT'S JUST... WELL...

I'M NOT SHALLOW-MINDED ENOUGH TO BE ANXIOUS OVER THINGS LIKE THE GAP IN OUR AGES OR OUR CAREERS.
IT DOESN'T FEEL REAL. IT FEELS LIKE I'M JUST DANCING ABOUT IN THE PALM OF HIS HAND.
...BUT.
YES?
whisper
KURA-HASHI ABOUT OUR DINNER PLANS FOR TONIGHT...
whisper
CHANGE IN PLANS YOU'RE COMING OVER.
PAR-DON?
C'mere.
THERE'S ONE THING I WONDER ABOUT.
WELL THEN, I'M OFF ON MY ROUNDS!
GRIN
I'LL GIVE YOU YOUR REWARD THEN. ♡
IS THERE ANY-THING ...
TAKE CARE!
? WHAT'S THE MATTER, KURAHASHI-KUN?

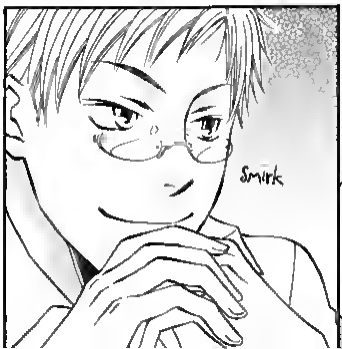
ANY LITTLE THING THAT I COULD DO THAT WOULD FLUSTER HIM?
YOUR FACE IS RED.
IT'S FINALLY GOTTEN COLD, HASN'T IT, KURAHASHI?
..PLEASE SPEAK IN JAPANESE TAKEMURA-SAN
OKAY, I'LL BE BLUNT WE'RE HAVING A GOUKON*, WANNA COME?
WON'T YOU COME WITH ME TO WARM YOUR WIND-CHILLED HEART?
THAT WAS TOO BLUNT.
*T/N: gokon: a group blind date, often in the form of a drinking party.

HUH? OKAY.
I'M DEEPLY INTERESTED IN THIS ITEM YOU HAVE ON YOUR AGENDA. CONTINUE.
Beginning of the month, so he's got nothing to do.
Isn't really busy at all.
What a wonderful boss!

!!
YOU KNOW, OUR BOSS IS RIGHT NEXT TO US.
Hi.

SO I WAS TALKING TO THIS GIRL FROM N PRODUCTS WHEN THE POSSIBILITY OF A GOUKON CAME UP, AND I DON'T HAVE MUCH GOING FOR ME
SO!!

SO BASICALLY, YOU USED ME TO BUY A GOUKON WITH THEM, IS THAT IT?
There's no good-looking ladies! Don't be sorry.
I GUESS THE GREAT HOPE OF OUR COMPANY IS DIFFERENT FROM THE REST OF US!
I SHOWED THE SECRETARY YOUR PICTURE, AND WELL, SHE TOOK THE BAIT!


Smirk

Glance
I'M NOT REALLY UP FOR THAT RIGHT NOW...

ME?
OKAY THEN! MANAGER! YOU CAN BE AN ACCOMPLICE! YOU COME TOO!
BLUNT
?!
WELL, IF HE WERE THE TYPE OF PERSON TO GET NERVOUS OVER A GOUKON, I WOULDN'T BE GETTING ALL WORKED UP ALL THE TIME.
this Japanese Goukons are just another part of the SCENE
-Huh?
WORRIED ABOUT WHAT THE MANAGER MIGHT THINK?!
Hold it!
TAKE-MURA-SAN?!
WELL, HE'S SINGLE NOW, AND ONLY 34, RIGHT?
That's right at least I've got looks.
YOU'RE CLEAR TO GO, MANAGER. AT LEAST YOU'VE GOT GOOD LOOKS.
HOLD IT, WHAT DOES THAT "AT LEAST" MEAN?
I HAVEN'T BEEN TO A GOUKON SINCE I GOT MAR-RIED.
AND THUS...
DO YOU STILL PLAY THE KING GAME?
Maybe the Senda Mitsuo game?
That's recently
T/N: The King Game and the Senda Mitsuo game (named after the Japanese talent) are both party games popular amongst high school and college students.

kya
kya
FOR SOME REASON, I WOUND UP GOING TO A GOUKON NEXT TO THE MAN I'M DATING.
HOW THE HELL DID THIS HAPPEN?
NO WAY! REALLY?
SAKAMOTO-SAN, YOU'RE THEIR BOSS?
YOU DON'T LOOK IT AT ALL!
ACTUALLY, I TURNED 34 THIS YEAR
I USUALLY KEEP AWAY FROM RABBLE LIKE THEM
fresh and relaxed

IS SAKAMOTO-SAN REALLY PLANNING ON TAKING THAT TACT HERE?
WELL, WHEN HE PLAYS NICE, HE LOOKS LIKE A GUY WHO'S SMART AND GOOD-LOOKING.
OH, BUT I'M SO JEALOUS! IT MUST BE SO NICE TO HAVE A BOSS LIKE THAT
RIGHT, KURAHASHI-SAN?
Already locked onto her target.
He usually drinks booze like water and ends up with his tie around his head
YEAH.
HE CERTAINLY IS A WONDERFUL PERSON, AND YOU'D NEVER THINK THAT HE'S DIVORCED.
YOU DON'T REALLY MEAN THAT, KURAHASHI.
The ladies pull back for a moment.
A LIGHT JAB.
What? Divorced?
SO IT DIDN'T WORK.
WHY DO YOU SAY THAT?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!
Businessmen are smooth at parties.
there.
WELL, IT'S THE TRUTH, SO RELAX, NO NEED TO BE SO STIFF.
I DON'T BITE
EVEN THOUGH I KNOW HIS SMILE IS FALSE...
THAT EXPRESSION THAT HE NEVER SHOWS ME...
THOUGH I'D HATE TO HAVE HIM TURN THAT FAKE EXPRESSION ON ME, TOO.
JUST INFURIATES ME.
MAKE UP YOUR MIND ALREADY, SELF!

I ALWAYS HAVE HIM ON MY MIND,
ALWAYS FOLLOWING THAT GAZE...
KURAHASHI-SAN! ♡
WHAT'S THE MATTER? AREN'T YOU GOING TO COME BACK AND JOIN US?
OH, I JUST GOT A CALL FROM A CUSTOMER THAT I HAD TO SEE TO
WHAT ABOUT YOU YOSHINAGA-SAN?
OH, IT WAS JUST A BIT STUFFY IN THERE FOR ME
I SEE
SO SHE FOLLOWED ME.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING AFTER THIS, KURAHASHI-SAN?
PARDON?
Already knows, but is asking anyway
WELL, I WAS THINKING THAT IF YOU HAVE THE TIME, MAYBE THE TWO OF US COULD SLIP OUT TOGETHER...
AND I WOULDN'T MIND IF YOU CAME OVER
.....
IF I TOOK THIS OPPORTUNITY...

AND HAD AN AFFAIR OR TWO...
WOULD THAT MOVE HIM AT ALL?
I RUSHED HEADLONG INTO THAT MESS LAST TIME, AND LOOK WHERE IT GOT...
. OH
DID I INTERRUPT?
KURA-HASHI-SAN?
Sigh
...JEEZ.
I'M LIKE A KID ACTING OUT FOR ATTEN-TION.

WHOO, BOY
I can't believe it!
MAN-AGER.
Oh, how embarrassing!
OH, NO, NOT AT ALL, I WAS JUST LEAVING .
Was off buying cigarettes.
I DON'T PARTICULARLY MIND
WHAT ABOUT YOU, MANAGER? YOU SEEM TO BE ON TOP OF YOUR GAME TONIGHT.
SORRY TO INTERRUPT WHILE YOU'RE BUSY BEING POPULAR.
JUST SO YOU KNOW,
I WASN'T CHEATING ON YOU.
I DID WAVER FOR A MOMENT, BUT...
LOOKS LIKE THE "DIVORCED" TRICK WORKED.
Well they're all ladies fresh out of college!
I'M A BUSINESSMAN. YOU'VE ONLY JUST BEGUN TO SEE MY ABILITY TO ENTERTAIN!
OR SO I'D LIKE TO SAY. BUT I HAVE YET TO EVEN BE ASKED FOR MY CELL PHONE NUMBER.

NO, JUST IN CASE.
I GUESS HE WOULDN'T BE WORRIED ABOUT IT.
pfft
WHAT'RE YOU MAKING EXCUSES FOR?
CHEATING, HUH...
pat
YOU THINK I'D LET YOU?

I'M GOING AHEAD
wave wave
...
...THAT'S RIGHT. IN THE END, I LOVE HIM.
sigh
I GUESS I'M THE IDIOT FOR HOPING TO SEE SOME EMOTION OUT OF HIM...
HE'S ONCE-DIVORCED, LOUD, AND HAS NO DELICACY WHATSOEVER,
BUT IN SPITE OF THAT, HE'S BRILLIANT AT HIS WORK AND DOESN'T GO EASY EVEN ON HIS LOVER.
AND WHY DOES HE HAVE SO MUCH SELF-CONFIDENCE?

I GIVE UP.
HE LOVES ME IN HIS OWN WAY.
I'LL JUST HAVE TO BE SATISFIED WITH THAT SMIRK JUST NOW.
OH, KURAHASHI-SAN'S BACK!
SORRY I TOOK SO LONG
WE WERE JUST TALKING ABOUT YOU, KURAHASHI-SAN!
SEEMS LIKE THEY HAVE HIGH HOPES FOR YOU!
WHAT'S THAT ABOUT?
It's pitiful but we get fired up talking about you.
WELL, WE WERE JUST TALKING BUSINESS
AND THE GREAT RICE BALL STRATEGY CAME UP
Oh, that...

OH, NO, THAT WASN'T MY DOING.
IT WAS ALL THANKS TO THE MANAGER'S ADVICE.
REALLY? BUT IT'S STILL AMAZING THAT YOU CAN TURN OUT SUCH GREAT RESULTS!
ISN'T IT?
KURA-HASHI
Well
I THINK THE MANAGER IS THE AMAZ-ING ONE
It really was something I never could have come up with.
THERE IS SUCH A THING AS BEING TOO HUMBLE, YOU KNOW
Snark
BE HONEST ABOUT THE FACT THAT YOU LIKE COMPLI-MENTS, FOR ONCE
His true character is showing.
REALLY?
HE'S LAUGHING AT ME.
BUT, YOU KNOW

I REALLY DO RESPECT YOU, MANAGER.
CLATTER

RATTLE
BATH-ROOM!!
Silence
BANG
HUH? JUST NOW...
WAS HE EMBAR-RASSED? HIS FACE WAS BRIGHT RED...
I KNOW, RIGHT? HE TOTALLY WAS, JUST NOW...
ALL OF A SUDDEN...

.....
...TEN MINUTES LATER,
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT! THAT WAS ALMOST CUTE! ♡
I'VE NEVER SEEN THE MANAGER LIKE THAT BEFORE!
HOW SWEET!
THE MANAGER CAME BACK LOOKING AS THOUGH NOTHING HAD HAPPENED.
I HAD A LOT OF FUN TODAY! LET'S DO THIS AGAIN! ♡
GOOD-BYE! ♡
MANAGER, KURAHASHI.
WE'RE ON THE SUBWAY, SO THIS IS WHERE WE PART WAYS!

THAT'S WHAT I WANT TO ASK!!
...WHAT WAS THAT FOR, ALL OF A SUDDEN?!
My stomach...
Whoa
Deliberately
MANAGER
THAT THING BACK THERE
...
YOUR SMILE NEVER REACHES YOUR EYES WHEN YOU SAY IT
...AM I REALLY THAT SUSPICIOUS?
WHAT? BUT I ALWAYS SAY STUFF LIKE THAT, DON'T I?
WHAT WERE YOU TRYING TO PULL, SPOUTING OFF SUCH EMBARRASSING THINGS WITH SUCH A STRAIGHT FACE?!
...BUT STILL, THAT REACTION WAS
YOU KNOW!
YOU ALWAYS SAY IT WITH THIS SUSPICIOUS SMILE THAT MAKES IT ALL SOUND LIKE A LOAD OF CRAP!!

YOU! HAVE NO IDEA!
NO IDEA HOW HARD I WORK AND WHAT KIND OF STAND I'M MAKING HERE...
TO BE A BOSS WHO DESERVES YOUR RESPECT!!
YOU OVERCOME HURDLES NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES I PUT THEM IN FRONT OF YOU!
IF I GIVE YOU ADVICE, YOU JUST PUT MORE INTO IT!
AND OUTSIDE OF WORK, YOU'RE MY BOYFRIEND?!
YOU JUST TRY BEING TOLD "I RESPECT YOU" WITH AN EXPRESSION LIKE THAT! YOU'D BLUSH TOO!
...AGH, DAMN IT...
...HEY!

SO IN OTHER WORDS, MANAGER,
YOU'RE SAYING... THAT MADE YOU HAPPY?
I WASN'T THE ONLY ONE GOING AROUND IN CIRCLES IN SEEMINGLY USELESS EFFORT!!
.....
...YES.
ARE YOU LISTENING TO ME?!
grr
I WON'T...
DON'T THINK YOU'VE WON JUST BECAUSE OF THIS.
WELL, THAT'S AWFUL MELLOW OF YOU.
?
YES, WELL...
I'M IN A GOOD MOOD, SO THIS TIME ...
VAIN, AND PROUD... AND PURE AT HEART.

IT IS A CONFUSING AND FRUSTRATING LOVE.
WE CAN CALL IT A DRAW.♡
...DON'T PUSH YOUR LUCK...
There's that same slimy smile!
BUT THINGS ARE PRO GRESSING IN THEIR OWN WAY.
SO LET'S SAY THAT THIS IN ITS OWN WAY... IS JUST FINE.

Victory is mine!♡
So I'm not a completely hopeless case
YOU KNOW, MANAGER, AFTER WE SPLIT UP, THE LADIES WERE GOING ON ABOUT HOW ADORABLE YOU WERE, AND THERE WERE A FEW REQUESTS FOR YOUR PHONE NUMBER...

Zantei, Koibito

tentatively Lovers

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KURAHASHI YUUYA, 26 YEARS OLD. IN HIS FOURTH YEAR WORKING IN SECTION THREE OF THE BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT OF A MAJOR CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS COMPANY.
HE'S A BIT OF A WOLF IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING, BUT HE'S GOT AN AFFABLE WAY WITH PEOPLE, AND, WELL, HE'S AN ALMOST DISGUSTINGLY GOOD WORKER.
THUD
HE'S TALL, HANDSOME, WITH A PLEASANTLY LOW VOICE, AND... THIS ACTUALLY KIND OF PISSES ME OFF A LITTLE...
.. WELL, THIS MAN WHO IS NEVER CONTENT TO BE SECOND-BEST IS MY SUBORDINATE AT WORK..
.. AND ALSO ...

Zantei, Koibito #3

TOHKO AKIBA PRESENTS

PLEASE DO SOMETHING ABOUT THAT TOTEM POLE BEFORE THE NEXT EARTHQUAKE.
SORRY, SORRY I WAS JUST SO ENTRANCED BY YOUR GOOD LOOKS!
Ahaha you're so helpful!
shuffle
rustle
shuffle
AH...
SEE, HERE IT IS, RIGHT OFF THE BAT
...
ARE YOU IGNORING ME KURAHASHI?
Where's the love?
ONO!
GOT A MINUTE?
WHAT IS IT, KURAHASHI?
THIS IS WHAT WAS MISSING FROM LAST YEAR'S DAILY REPORTS
From the third section
WEREN'T THEY LOOKING FOR IT IN MANAGEMENT?
DID YOU FIND IT? THANKS
I'LL TAKE IT, IF YOU DON'T MIND

SORRY IT WAS SO LATE
NOT A PROBLEM
OH, MANAGER?
Somehow left behind?
YES?
THE POST-ITS MARK WHERE WE'RE MISSING APPROVAL TO SETTLE TODAY'S ACCOUNTS
AND ABOUT THIS BUSINESS CARD, THEIR CONSUMPTION WILL BE UP NEXT MONTH, SO THEY ORDERED SOME EXTRA JUST IN CASE.
The orange ones are for corrections.
fast and businesslike
THAT'S ALL. IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME.
NOD
HE'S ONE OF THE FEW PEOPLE WHO STARTED HERE WHEN I DID
Just as I thought!
I don't know him.
MORE IMPORTANTLY, YOU STOPPED FILING DAILY REPORTS, DIDN'T YOU?
perfectly done
...ONO FROM ACCOUNTING?
ARE YOU TWO CLOSE?
UGH.

IF YOU CAUSE ISSUES FOR ACCOUNTING, THEY'RE GOING TO GIVE US A LOT OF FLAK, SO PLEASE, DON'T!
AHH, THAT'S AWFUL, MANAGER.
They'll stop giving us overtime after hours!
hustle
hustle
ONO'S BEEN WORKING OVERTIME EVERY DAY BECAUSE OF THAT.
DIDN'T YOU GET THE EMAIL ABOUT THE REPORTS BEING GATHERED FOR THE NEXT INSPECTION?
THOSE DAILY REPORTS ARE COMPLETELY POINTLESS.
I trust everyone working under me! They do their work even if I don't check on them!
Are you a child or a grown man?
This is why I hate intermediary administrators.
ALL RIGHT, IT'S MY FAULT.
I'LL APOLOGIZE TO ONO LATER
The type to do well on tests but forget his homework.
YOU'RE CLOSE ENOUGH TO ONO TO HAVE TO HELP HIM OUT LIKE THAT?
Though that was kind of pathetic, Manager.
RIGHT? AND HE'S USUALLY SO COLD AND WEARS AN EXPRESSION LIKE THIS!
Are you this harsh on anyone else?
OH, NO, WE'RE NOT ALL THAT CLOSE, REALLY

BUT
I SUPPOSE YOU COULD SAY..
THAT I FEEL COMFORTABLE WITH HIM.
...HUH?
OH? THAT'S UNEXPECTED
ONO DOESN'T SEEM TOO FRIENDLY YOU WOULDN'T THINK YOU'D GET ALONG
BUT YOU KNOW, HE AND KURAHASHI ARE BOTH REALLY SERIOUS ABOUT WORK.
AHH, A GENERATION OF GUYS YOU CAN'T GET ALONG WITH.
Look how nitpicky he is!
Ahaha there's no place for us older folks
Excuse me for being a capable underling.
Next are details
HUH?
WHAT'S THIS ABOUT?
chomp

ISN'T THIS JUST...
A TINY BIT OFF?
HEY, KURAHASHI.
YOU'RE IN LOVE WITH ME...
...RIGHT?
Yakitori
...YES
WHY DO YOU ASK, ALL OF A SUDDEN?

Two men eating take-out dinner at home.
ISN'T THAT JUST A BIT BELATED...?
NOW, NOW, DON'T WORRY YOUR LITTLE MIND ABOUT IT.
OH, NO, IT'S NOTHING.
JUST WONDERING.
THERE'S NO WAY HE'D HAVE STRANGE FEELINGS FOR ONO WHEN HE'S GOT A LOVER (ME).
And besides he's straight otherwise
More because it's a hassle than because of morals
THAT'S RIGHT. KURAHASHI ISN'T THE TYPE TO GO AFTER A GUY HE'S NOT INTERESTED IN.
WHAT'RE YOU TALKING ABOUT? YOU KNOW YOU LOVE IT ♡
heh ♡
old man ♡
AND BESIDES COULD YOU BE A BIT NICER WHEN YOU ASK SOMETHING LIKE THAT?
YOU HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO DELICACY, AS ALWAYS
JUST MY IMAGINATION, HUH?
munch

BLU
NT
BUT MANAGER, YOU'RE THE ONE WHO JUMPED ME.
I DIDN'T GET TO TELL YOU BEFORE,
OH, ABOUT THAT...
WHO WAS THE ONE WHO GOT COMPLETELY SMASHED AND JUMPED ME!?
You lecher
Snap
Huh?
I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT, BRAT.
NO, I'M SERIOUS I DIDN'T SWING THAT WAY AT ALL BEFORE...
IT WAS ALMOST RAPE UNTIL ABOUT HALFWAY THROUGH.
A funny story that's not at all funny.
AH!!
.....
I'M TOO GENTLE TO DO SOMETHING LIKE...

That?
VERY VAGUELY ...
I... I THINK I REMEMBER FORCIBLY MOUNTING UP ON YOU...
If you drink, make sure you can hold your liquor.
I'M SORRY TO SAY IT,
BUT THAT'S IT.
WHAT?!
WAIT, BUT THAT MEANS...
YOU WEREN'T IN LOVE WITH ME FROM THE VERY START?!
WELL, NO, NOT AT THAT POINT IN TIME.
EVEN IGNORING THE SAME-SEX ISSUE, YOU'RE THE EXACT OPPOSITE OF MY TYPE.
Waaah!!
THAT IS SO CRUEL ...!!
WELL... THAT WAS A BIT... BOTHERSOME AT TIMES, I SUPPOSE...
No, well, you're my boss.

WAIT, THEN...
WHAT IS KURAHASHI'S TYPE?
WELL
I WAS CONVINCED THAT KURAHASHI LAUNCHED AN ATTACK ON ME BECAUSE I WAS IN HIS STRIKE ZONE.
WHAT THE HELL?
gulp
ASK ME ABOUT MY TYPE ALL YOU'D LIKE.
BUT IN THE END, THIS IS HOW IT TURNED OUT. .
AND ISN'T THAT FINE JUST THE WAY IT IS?

WHAT'S THE DISSATISFIED LOOK FOR?
.....
REALLY?
I HAVE NO COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE WAY THINGS HAVE TURNED OUT.
Booo
Booo
Booo
YOU'RE THE ONE WEARING AN EXPRESSION THAT SAYS "OH, WELL, NOTHING I CAN DO ABOUT IT."
WELL,
OR SO I SAID.
All right! We've eaten dinner and once we get to the bath, it's battle!
I can't put up with him anymore.
WHAT-EVER.
THE IMPORTANT THING IN BUSINESS IS RESULTS!

Smoking Area
OF COURSE I'D WORRY ABOUT IT.
I THOUGHT HE WAS INFATUATED WITH ME, AND IT TURNS OUT HE WAS JUST GOING WITH THE FLOW?
AND THEN HE SAYS I'M NOT HIS TYPE OR SOMETHING...
How rude!
SAKAMOTO-SAN!
YEAH?
I'M TRYING TO DECIDE WHICH CLIENT TO WORK ON NEXT TERM.
BETWEEN N LTD AND I LTD., WHICH DO YOU THINK WOULD BE BETTER BUSINESS?
HMM IT'S TOTALLY RANDOM, BUT...
N LTD FOR SURE
Thanks!
The smokers from section 3
THE MANAGER SAID IT WAS TOTALLY RANDOM, TSUJI-SAN ARE YOU STILL GOING TO GO WITH IT?
WELL, HE'S GOT A GREAT SENSE FOR THESE THINGS, YOU KNOW? INTUITION OR WHATEVER.
THAT'S RIGHT

"DON'T THINK. FEEL!" IS MY PERSONAL MOTTO
From the Bruce Lee generation.
OH, IT'S THE OH-SO-CAPABLE YOUNG-STERS.
And the non-smokers
THEY GET ALONG SURPRISING-LY WELL, IT SEEMS
REALLY LEVEL-HEADED FOR A COUPLE OF GUYS IN THEIR MIDTWENTIES
LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE PRETTY LIKE-MINDED, HUH?
What's that?

...HE CERTAINLY DOES LOOK RELAXED.
WHAT KIND OF EXPRESSION DID HE HAVE WITH ME?
...HEY, TSUJI?
DO YOU THINK KURAHASHI AND I ARE LIKE-MINDED?
AHA HA HA! YOU ASK THE FUNNIEST THINGS.
straight up!
NO. NOT EVEN A NANO.
...SERIOUSLY?!
Nano?! Less than a micro?!
YOU TWO ARE COMPLETE OPPOSITES
Kurahashi counts on Arte Manager on his art
OH, YES I FEEL SORRY FOR KURAHASHI SOMETIMES WHEN YOU TWO TALK
His poker face breaks down every once in a while
THAT'S...

Tsuka-et me and such
NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT, WHEN HE'S WITH ME, HE'S ALWAYS ANGRY OR SURPRISED OR APPALLED...
Why don't you sit down on your smoking?
HE NEVER HAS THAT EXPRESSION HE DOES WHEN HE'S WITH ONO...
You have to feel sorry for him when you see that expression!
...NOT... COMPLETELY UNTRUE, HUH...
Right?
I SUPP-OSE YOU COULD SAY...
THAT I FEEL COMFORTABLE WITH ONO.
.. WAIT, COULD IT BE...
THAT THAT'S KURAHASHI'S TYPE?

WHOA, WHOA, WHAT?
WHAT'S HE ALL FRIENDLY FOR?
O.
Yeah hi
How cute
NOD
IF I WERE LIKE THAT, THEN WOULD KURAHASHI...
ACCEPT HIMSELF AND THIS?
AND IF SO...
SORRY ABOUT THAT, TSUJI, TADA
MANAGER?
jump
ouch

FORGET WHAT I JUST SAID.
—WHAT HAPPENED, MANAGER?
YOUR DESK IS CLEAN.
Did the general manager yell at you?
Uwa!
IT IS!
YEAH, WELL
I'VE NEVER SEEN IT LIKE THAT BEFORE!
THEY SAY THAT BEAUTIFUL SALES HAVE A BEAUTIFUL BASE
THAT'S RIGHT... I HAVE STARTED OBSERVING THE ENEMY'S (?) MOVEMENTS.
PROD
PROD

I INFILTRATED ACCOUNTING UNDER THE GUISE OF GOING TO APOLOGIZE,
I'M SORRY I GAVE YOU SO MUCH TROUBLE THE OTHER DAY.
HERE'S MY APOLOGY. TEE HEE
DON'T MENTION IT.
THIS IS MY WORK, AFTER ALL.
so Coool!
AND I RESEARCHED THE BEHAVIOR AND WORK METHODS OF A CERTAIN ONO.
AS A RESULT, EVERY POINT OF DIFFERENCE BETWEEN US...
?
HIS DESK IS SO SPIC AND SPAN...
I SUPPOSE I START WITH CLEANING.
MANAGER
I CAN'T DECIDE WHICH CLIENT TO GO WITH EITHER.
WOVERINE

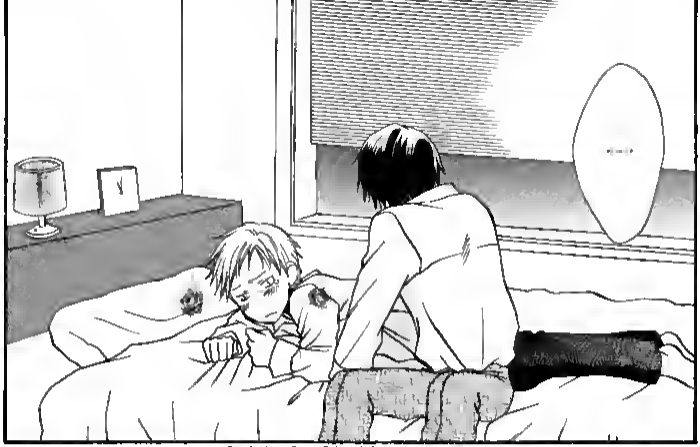
CAN YOU DO WHAT YOU DID WITH TSUJI-SAN AND USE THAT INTUITION OF YOURS TO HELP?
HUH?
SURE HOLD ON A MOMENT
fwip
clack
clack
clack
clack
HUH?
OKAY ACCORDING TO THE DATA FROM LAST TERM, S CONSTRUCTION ISN'T VERY STABLE— IT HAS ITS UPS AND DOWNS
Looking smart
GOING WITH T INC WOULD BE THE SAFE MOVE.
MA... MANAGER?
But your intuition
Done!
HERE WE GO!

What happened to the wild "reverse me!" personality?
. HEY, DID THE MANAGER HIT HIS HEAD OR SOMETHING?
mutter
mutter
. WHO KNOWS
DON'T MENTION IT.
AH... THANKS
Not intuition but
RELIANCE ON SOUND THEORY
AN FC-2000 ORDER FROM TOKIMA JUST CAME IN!!
MANAGER!!
...YEAH.
NOD
MANAGER, GIVE ME A BIT OF PRAISE HERE! I DID IT!
IT MUST HAVE BEEN HARD! GOOD JOB!
HEH HEH! IT WAS WORTH THE STRUGGLE!
WOW! YOU DID IT, TAKEMURA!!

ALWAYS CALM AND COMPOSED.
LOW-KEY
WELL DONE, TAKEMURA.
I'M PROUD TO HAVE YOU WORKING FOR ME
HUH? WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, MANAGER?
YOU USUALLY GO ALL GOOGLY-EYED AND EXCITED AND FLAIL ABOUT GOING "WAY TO GO! HIGH FIVE!" AND...
And and
Oh, you
HEH HEH HEH YOU'RE HILARIOUS TAKEMURA
I'M NOT THAT MISCHIEVOUS OF A CHARACTER, YOU KNOW?
WHAAAAT? WAI— THAT'S SO DULL!!
DON'T I GET ONE OF YOUR MANLY EMBRACES?!
I worked so haaard!
You're so mean!
Aha ha! I laugh at you.

In addition, no wrapping my tie around my head. No fighting while drunk. No strip rock-paper-scissors.
ALSO ON THE LIST: DON'T DRINK TOO MUCH
DOCUMENTS MUST BE DRAWN UP CONSCIENTIOUSLY AND LEGIBLY, ETC. ETC.
No loud distracting colors on Excel documents.
Staples go on the upper left corner at a 45° angle.
.....
AHH.
HOW VERY COMMENDABLE OF YOU, SAKAMOTO TATSUHISA.
ALL RIGHTY
But it sure is tough to live with a personality like this.
Usually very free-spirited.
Yay Yay
ALL RIGHT. I SHOULD BE PRETTY CLOSE TO HIS TYPE NOW.
KURAHASHI SHOULD START ADORING ME EVEN MORE ANY DAY NOW

ALL THAT'S LEFT...
squeeze
AH!
KURA-HASHI...
NO, WAIT!
IT'S EMBAR-RASSING...
PLEASE... TURN OFF THE LIGHTS...!



But they've still got all their clothes on.

TO BE BLUNT, IT'S DISTURBING!!
HUH?
You've never pretended to be that shy before in your entire life!
I'M ASKING YOU WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO PULL HERE!!
WHAT HAPPENED TO THE MAN WHO ALWAYS JUMPS ME?!
YOU ACTUALLY LIKE THE WARM, CALM TYPE, DON'T YOU? LIKE ONO.
Be it a man or woman
THAT PUTS ME OUTSIDE OF YOUR STANDARDS, DOESN'T IT?
IT'S MY "MAKE KURAHASHI FALL EVEN MORE IN LOVE WITH ME!"♡ PROJECT.
HUH?
—DOES ONO USUALLY ACT LIKE THAT?
NO, I JUST FIGURED THAT'S WHAT HE'S LIKE AT NIGHT.
.....
click
SO I TRIED CHANGING MY IMAGE A BIT, WITH ONO AS MY REFERENCE.

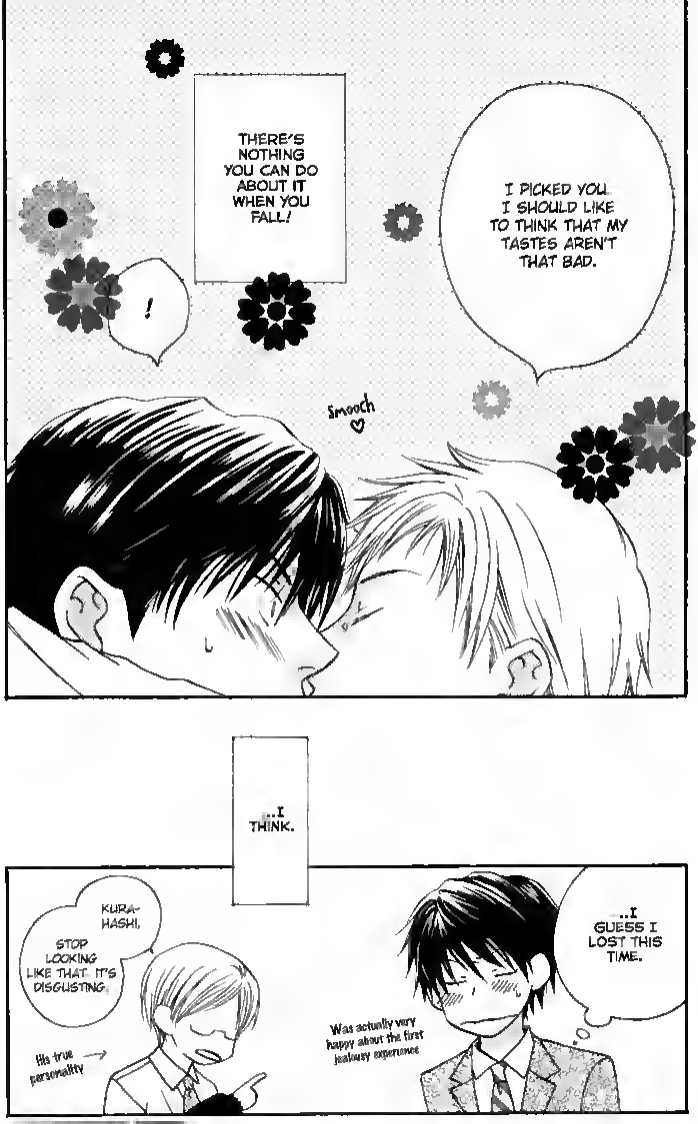
I KNOW FULL WELL THAT YOU LOVE ME, KURAHASHI.
BUT IT'S LIKE THERE'S A PART OF YOU THAT HASN'T QUITE ACCEPTED THAT...
AND I WANTED EVEN THAT PART OF YOU THAT HASN'T ACCEPTED IT...
TO FALL IN LOVE WITH ME, TOO.

...HUH? ISN'T THIS THE POINT WHERE YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE TOUCHED BY MY WORDS?
NO
I'M JUST WONDERING WHAT WAS WRONG WITH YOUR HEAD
TURN
YOU KNOW, IT IS TRUE THAT I FEEL COMFORTABLE WITH ONO
THAT'S BECAUSE HIS PERSONALITY IS SIMILAR TO MINE
BUT UNFORTUNATELY, YOU CAN'T JUST SAY THAT SOMEONE YOU'RE COMFORTABLE WITH IS AUTOMATICALLY A ROMANTIC INTEREST. THINGS JUST DON'T WORK THAT WAY.
...BUT THERE'S STILL SOMETHING ON YOUR MIND, RIGHT?
THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ONO AND ME IS THAT HE, UNLIKE ME, HAS SOME KIND OF COMPLEX ABOUT HIS SERIOUSNESS.
THIS IS JUST BETWEEN THE TWO OF US, BUT HE ADMIRES FREE-SPIRITED PEOPLE LIKE YOU
HUH?!
If that incident with the daily reports had been anyone else, he would have lodged a complaint. He's not usually that nice.
WHAT A PROMISING YOUNG MAN
I couldn't bear it if there were any more people like you.
THAT'S WHAT I WAS TRYING TO STOP.
Oh my

Stare
BUT IT'S TRUE THAT YOU DON'T ACCEPT YOURSELF FOR FALLING FOR ME EVEN THOUGH I'M SO FAR OUTSIDE YOUR STANDARDS, RIGHT?
You can't bear it when things don't fit into your little pre-established harmony.
—NO. I DON'T UNDERSTAND IT,
BUT I DO ACCEPT IT.
YOU LIAR!
YOU DO KNOW THAT WE'VE BEEN GOING OUT FOR FIVE MONTHS, RIGHT?
I GAVE UP ON THAT ISSUE IN THE FIRST MONTH
Excuse me...
Though to think of the suffering I went through until I asserted that start to our relationship!...
...HEY, SAKAMOTO-SAN.

BEING WITH YOU MAKES EVERY DAY POSITIVELY NERVE-WRACKING.
BUT THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER IS THAT I FELL IN LOVE WITH YOU WITH COMPLETE DISREGARD TO MY REGULAR "STANDARDS."
—AND DON'T YOU THINK THAT MAKES IT ALL THE BETTER?
THAT REMARK...
AND THAT SLIGHTLY FRUSTRATED EXPRESSION MADE ME WONDER A BIT IF HE REALLY HAD ACCEPTED IT,
BUT SOMEHOW, ODDLY ENOUGH...

SEEING HIM LIKE THAT MADE MY HEART SWELL MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE COULD.
Squeeze
...YEAH
AND I'M NOT GOING OUT WITH YOU TO SEE YOU LOOKING ALL CALM AND COLLECTED IN THE FIRST PLACE.
AHH, LOVE REALLY IS A CAR CRASH.
NO MATTER HOW CAREFUL YOU ARE, EVEN IF YOU DON'T ACCEPT IT..
YOU REALLY ARE COMPLETELY TASTELESS, AREN'T YOU.
HUH? REALLY?


THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT WHEN YOU FALL!
!
I PICKED YOU. I SHOULD LIKE TO THINK THAT MY TASTES AREN'T THAT BAD.
Smooch
...I THINK.
KURA-HASHI, STOP LOOKING LIKE THAT. IT'S DISGUSTING.
His true personality
Was actually very happy about the first hallway experience
..I GUESS I LOST THIS TIME.

Zanbei, Koibito

tentatively Lovers

Schneider Kate Bell

Translation by Dominique

Edition of 0153

www.katebellstudio.net

As the
Buddha Says

WHEN I WAS IN THE THIRD GRADE ...
RAY CAME HERE FROM ENGLAND.
BLONDIE! HEY, BLONDIE! GO BACK WHERE YOU CAME FROM!
YOU AREN'T ACTUALLY FROM THE TEMPLE, ARE YOU!
YOUR DAD MIGHT BE JAPANESE, BUT YOU'RE COMPLETELY DIFFERENT!
UGH, DON'T LOOK AT ME WITH THOSE UGLY EYES!
YOU'RE THAT MONK'S KID "FROM A FORMER MARRIAGE," RIGHT?
LOOK, THIS IS JAPAN! MAKE YOUR HAIR BLACK, YOU PUNK!
Whap!!
YOU PUNK! YOU..
WAAAAH!
HMPH!

COME ON, LET'S GO!
DON'T JUST STAND THERE CRYING AND LETTING THEM DO WHATEVER THEY WANT!
HONESTLY!
tug
tug
THANK...
YOU...
UH..
YOUR EYES ARE SO PRETTY!
WHA.
LOOK AT YOU!
...I'VE NEVER BEEN TOLD... THAT BEFORE
PRETTY?
YEAH! I'VE NEVER SEEN SOMEONE WITH GREEN EYES BEFORE!
AND YOUR HAIR IS SO SHINY AND NICE!!
YEAH, DON'T LISTEN TO A WORD THEY SAY! IGNORE 'EM!

I'LL WATCH OUT FOR YOU FROM NOW ON!
MY PARENTS OWN THE FISH SHOP ON THE BACK SIDE OF THE SHOPPING DISTRICT!
TAKIGAWA SHINTA'S THE NAME!
...REALLY?
A MAN NEVER GOES BACK ON HIS WORD!
...SO YOU'LL ALWAYS ...
ALWAYS BE WITH ME, RIGHT...?
HE SAID, AND GRIPPED MY HAND ...
BUT THE SPRING OF HIS FIFTEENTH YEAR, HE VANISHED WITHOUT A WORD...

AND FOUR YEARS LATER...
Splash
Sniff
Glug
glug
ALL RIGHT! CLEANING'S DONE.
HE RETURNED TO THIS TOWN...
SHIN-CHAN!
GOOD MORNING! WOW, IT'S GONNA BE HOT TODAY, TOO! ♡
GRIN ♡
...WITH HIS BLOND-HAIR AND GREEN-EYES, WEARING A BLACK MONK'S STOLE.

Smiling along with him
YEAH, IT SURE IS.
...
NO WAY!
DON'T TALK TO ME SO CASUALLY!
Ignore
IT MUST BE TOUGH, HAVING TO WORK HERE SO EARLY IN THE MORNING.
HOW LONG DOES YOUR SUMMER BREAK LAST?
DIDN'T I JUST TELL YOU NOT TO TALK TO ME?!
YOU'RE A MONK, YOU SHOULD JUST GO AROUND TO THE HOUSES OF THE FAITHFUL OR WHATEVER!!
YOU MAY THINK THAT WE SHOULD LET BYGONES BE BYGONES, BUT I HAVEN'T FORGIVEN YOU AT ALL!!
SHIN-CHAN...
YOU.

.. YOU KNOW WHAT?!
I'M PISSED!!!
Seriously!
YOU WERE THAT LONELY WHILE I WAS AWAY TRAINING IN THE MOUNTAINS...?
How passionate!
...OH, I'M SORRY, SHIN-CHAN.
I WAS REALLY SHOCKED!
RAY IS AT THE HEAD TEMPLE.
YOU DIDN'T COME TO SCHOOL, SO I WENT TO YOUR HOUSE BECAUSE I WAS SO WORRIED, AND THEN YOUR MOM TOLD ME...!
HE LEFT HOME TO ENTER THE BUDDHIST PRIESTHOOD...
FAR FROM DISCUSSING IT WITH ME, HE DIDN'T EVEN MENTION IT ONCE.
...!
AND I THOUGHT THAT WE WOULD BE TOGETHER IN MIDDLE SCHOOL, HIGH SCHOOL, AND BEYOND.
"ALWAYS BE WITH ME," HE SAID...

HUH?!
SHIN-CHAN?
UH— NO, IT'S NOTHING
AND SO!!
—HEY, SHIN-CHAN.
Tee hee
YOU'VE ALWAYS LIKED MY FACE, HAVEN'T YOU.
BLUSH
Enthralled by the sight
...HMM.
AND I PROMISED THAT I WOULD ALWAYS PROTECT HIM...
Shut up!
GO DO YOUR WORK, YOU PATHETIC EXCUSE FOR A MONK!!!
Don't you dare show your face here again!
AHA HA HA!
SEE YOU LATER!

Some people really have a lot of time on their hands

click
...HE REALLY IS THE SAME AS ALWAYS
ALMOST AWFULLY SO...

WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN MY LIVING ROOM?
SORRY FOR THE INTRU-SION! ♡
!!
I GOT PICKED UP BY YOUR OLDER BROTHER, SHIN-CHAN "PLEASE DON'T ABANDON MY BROTHER," HE SAID .. ~~~
Brother (24)
Unna the pretty omega
The bastard!
IT'S BEEN SO LONG SINCE WE'VE HAD TEA, JUST THE TWO OF US
HERE, HAVE SOME TEA. ♡
WAIT, AREN'T OUR POSITIONS KIND OF REVERSED FROM HOW THEY USED TO BE?
BACK WHEN WE WERE KIDS, WE USED TO ALWAYS HAVE SNACKS WHILE ADMIRING THE BUDDHA STATUE IN OUR SHRINE

WELL.. BUT, YOU KNOW,
I WANTED TO GO TO THE TEMPLE.
...AND WHOSE FAULT DO YOU THINK IT IS THAT WE STOPPED BEING ABLE TO DO THAT?
MY DAD DIDN'T TELL ME THAT I SHOULD OR SHOULDN'T FOLLOW IN HIS FOOTSTEPS, HE LET ME PICK
BESIDES, HE'S THE ONE WHO OVERCAME ALL THE OPPOSITION TO MARRY MOM. HE KNOWS THAT YOU HAVE TO DO WHAT YOU WANT.
YOU DID?
YOUR DAD DIDN'T MAKE YOU?
HE WOULDN'T PUSH YOU TO DO ANYTHING.
HE'S A VIRTUOUS GUY. I GUESS YOU COULD SAY.
HMM.. YEAH, I GUESS.
Smile
YEAH.
I RESPECT HIM FOR THAT.

YOU PRACTICALLY RAN AWAY.
WHY'D YOU GO WITHOUT TELLING ME ANYTHING..?
...THEN...
WELL, THE WAY YOU PUT IT, IT REALLY SOUNDS LIKE YOU WERE LONELY WITHOUT ME, SHIN-CHAN.
Huh?!
LEAVING ME BEHIND...
WERE YOU LONELY?
Chuckle
...HUH?
SAY THAT YOU WERE LONELY.
IF YOU SAY IT, I'LL TELL YOU WHY I LEFT.
My fists are still enough to smack you a good one!
YOU KNOW...
DON'T GET CARRIED AWAY..
SAY IT.
With a bang!

TAP
COME ON...
...SAY IT?
.....
YOU HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO INTENTION OF ANSWERING SERIOUSLY, DO YOU, RAY.
Huh?
PUSH!
THAT'S NOT TRUE.

I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO PULL HERE, BUT...
AH!
IT'S THE PRINCE AND SHIN!!
...ALL RIGHT.
CLATTER
WHATEVER! JUST GO AWAY!
I GOTTA GET BACK TO THE SHOP.
I'M NOT TOO SURE HOW I THINK OF THOSE MONK'S ROBES ON YOU, RAY...
I HAVEN'T SEEN THE TWO OF YOU TOGETHER SINCE MIDDLE SCHOOL
(AWW)
GOING TO WORK IN THE SHOP, SHIN?
-Hi there.
Kids from the stores in town.
YOU KNOW, PEOPLE ARE CALLING YOU "PRINCE" ALL AROUND THE NEIGHBORHOOD
prince
AWW, WHY? I USED TO GO TO SCHOOL WITH YOU, SO LET IT SLIDE!
"Prince"
MIZOGUCHI-SAN, IF YOU COULD REFRAIN FROM CALLING ME THAT...
HUH?

WELL, OF COURSE! A GORGEOUS, BLOND, GREEN-EYED HOTTIE IS WALKING AROUND WEARING MONK'S ROBES!
IT'S LIKE A FAIRY TALE!!
WE WERE SURPRISED AT FIRST, TOO.
A handsome monk with green eyes!
And the gold stole he wore to announce it paired with those golden eyelashes!
TA-DAAA
YOUR HEAD WAS STILL SHAVED WHEN YOU CAME BACK HERE LAST YEAR, RIGHT?
THE ENTIRE TOWN WAS IN AN UPROAR ABOUT THAT FOR A WHILE
AND REMEMBER THAT WAKE AFTER A FUNERAL WHERE EVERYONE WHO CAME TO GIVE THEIR CONDOLENCES WERE ALL IN A FUSS ABOUT HIM.
That's right!
...TIMES LIKE THIS, I CAN SENSE THAT RAY REALLY CHANGED.

IT WAS ESPECIALLY TRUE BACK WHEN WE WERE LITTLE, BUT EVEN AFTER WE STARTED MIDDLE SCHOOL, HE DIDN'T PARTICULARLY MAKE FRIENDS.
HE WASN'T THE KIND OF GUY WHO FIT IN IN TOWN LIKE THIS.
WHAT THE HELL?
YOU GUYS NEVER EVEN TRIED TO TALK TO HIM IN GRADE SCHOOL!
THAT'S WHY HE ALWAYS STUCK CLOSE TO ME, GOING, "SHIN-CHAN, SHIN-CHAN"...
WHAT'S WITH THIS TRAIN OF THOUGHT?
... WAIT.
THAT'S RIGHT! SHIN!
YOU MADE UP WITH THE PRINCE, RIGHT?
I HAVE NOT!!
HUH?! YOU'RE STILL ANGRY?
YOU GOT ALONG SO WELL..!
THAT'S WHY! LISTEN UP, RAY!

DO YOU KNOW...
WHAT YOU DID TO ME?!
YOU BETRAYED ME!!
I WON'T FORGIVE YOU UNTIL YOU TELL ME WHY YOU DIDN'T TELL ME BACK THEN!
DON'T YOU FORGET!!
pant pant
...SHIN-CHAN...
YOU REALLY...
DON'T KNOW?...

...I WANTED ...
TO RUN AWAY FROM YOU, SHIN-CHAN.
I WANTED TO KNOW THE REASON WHY,
NO MATTER WHAT.
AND I GOT MY ANSWER SO SHOCK-INGLY EASILY.
AND...

IT WAS SHOCK-INGLY ...
HEAVY ...
...GOT IT...
...WAI--
IS IT OKAY LIKE THAT, PRINCE?
Hesitantly
...BACK IN MIDDLE SCHOOL,
YOU WERE SO.
...THAT'S HOW IT IS.
RUSTLE

HEY, SHIN
DID RAY-CHAN GO HOME?
Flip
HEY!
SO THOSE SIX YEARS WE WERE TOGETHER ...
WHERE NOTHING BUT ME CLINGING TO THE WRONG IMPRESSION, HUH?
I WAS TRYING TO PROTECT HIM, BUT I ACTUALLY JUST BLOCKED OFF HIS WORLD FROM EVERYTHING ELSE.
...SHIN?
What about the shop?
"YOU DID?
YOUR DAD DIDN'T MAKE YOU?"
FSSSH
THAT'S RIGHT. IF HE CAN ACT LIKE THAT NOW,
THEN HE MIGHT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO GET ALONG PRETTY WELL ON HIS OWN FOUR YEARS AGO, TOO.
I...
"I WANTED TO RUN AWAY."

...SELF-SATISFACTION? HYPOCRISY? MY OWN FAKE SENSE OF JUSTICE?
FOR MY OWN EGO AND SATISFACTION...
...DID SOMETHING REALLY BAD..
FOR A LONG TIME...
NO,
THAT'S NOT IT.
I PROBABLY JUST WANTED ...
SIIIGH
..I'M THE WORST
TO MONOPOLIZE HIM.

IT'S RAY.
THREE SLICES, COMES OUT TO 498 YEN
DO YOU WANT ICE TOO...
HE'S JUST THE MOST POPULAR MAN IN TOWN, ISN'T HE.
IT'S BEEN TWO WEEKS ...
AND I HAVEN'T SPOKEN TO RAY ONCE SINCE THEN.
AND HE'S STOPPED TALKING TO ME, TOO.
MAYBE I WAS JUST AN ANNOYANCE TO HIM— BACK THEN, AND NOW.
SHIT.
SET

IT MAKES ME WANNA CRY.
AND I HAVE TO HAVE A DELIVERY NOW, OF ALL TIMES...
Stupid Rays aunt.
clunk
WELL, AS LONG AS I DON'T SEE RAY...
HE'S HERE!!
RAN SMACK INTO HIM!
Jump
FISH HAVE TO BE FRESH!
SO HURRY UP AND GO AWAY!!
I'M SORRY, BUT THE CHIEF PRIEST IS BUSY AT THE MOMENT.

I SEE...
HE'S REALLY A FULL-FLEDGED MONK, HUH
HMM...
AOKI-SAMA, IF YOU WOULD ALLOW ME THE HONOR OF PERFORMING YOUR HUSBAND'S SIXTH MEMORIAL SERVICE?
I WOULD BE GLAD TO DISCUSS ANYTHING YOU MAY WISH
HE DOESN'T NEED MY HELP ANY...
I'VE BEEN TELLING YOU!
IT'S OUT OF THE QUESTION!
YOU'RE A FOREIGNER, AREN'T YOU?!
I DON'T WANT A FOREIGNER READING ME SUTRAS!
YES.
WHA—
ARE YOU REALLY EVEN A MONK?

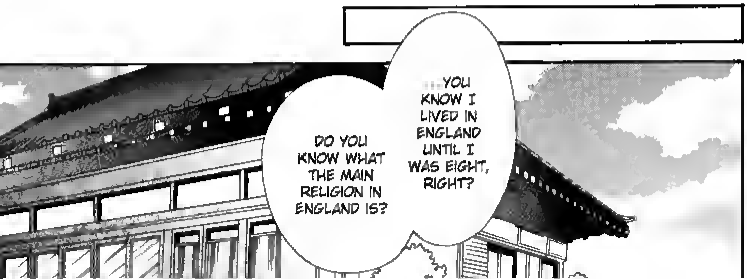
WELL, THERE AREN'T MANY PEOPLE WHO WANT TO BECOME MONKS NOWADAYS.
I HAVE A BUDDHIST NAME AS WELL.
THIS IS MY SECOND YEAR SINCE UNDERGOING TRAINING AT THE HEAD TEMPLE.
WHAT THE HELL'S SHE RAVING ABOUT, THAT BITCH!!!
SEEMS LIKE THIS TEMPLE HAS REALLY GONE DOWNHILL.
OH?
THAT'S RIGHT.
I'M NOT NEEDED ANYMORE.
RAY WON'T CALL OUT FOR ME.
WAIT, SELF, WAIT. RAY IS DEALING WITH THIS LIKE AN ADULT.
IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE THE CHIEF PRIEST.
BUT COULD YOU AT LEAST CALL A JAPANESE MONK FOR ME?
THERE'S NO NEED FOR ME TO STICK MY NOSE IN.
JUST LOOK AT YOU! THOSE EYES AND THAT HAIR! I CAN'T TRUST YOU!
BUT!

WHA
.....
SHIN-CHAN?
BANG
YOU'RE COM-PLETELY, TOTALLY WRONG, AOKI!
WHAT'D YOU MEAN, THERE AREN'T ENOUGH MONKS? IT'S THE COMPLETE OPPOSITE!
WELL, IT DEPENDS ON THE SECT, BUT THERE ARE MORE THAN ENOUGH MONKS!
There are lots of people quitting jobs to become monks!
IT'S SIMPLE.
THE HEAD TEMPLE AIN'T SO LENIENT THAT THEY'LL LET SOMEONE LEAVE THE TEMPLE BEFORE HE'S FULLY TRAINED!
EH ..
I--I SUPPOSE NOT .
I CAN'T PUT UP WITH IT.
YOU THINK HE COULD WALTZ IN AND OUT WITHOUT DOIN' ANYTHING JUST BECAUSE HE WAS THE MONK'S SON?!
THIS TEMPLE MAY BE SMALL, BUT IT'S GOT GOOD STATUS, YA KNOW!

DON'T DOUBT RAY'S HARD WORK...
WHY THE HELL SHOULD I CARE WHAT HE THINKS?
I DON'T WANT THE GUY I LIKE TO BE HURT!!
JUST BECAUSE OF SOME STUPID LITTLE THING LIKE WHAT HE LOOKS LIKE!
OH, YES.
PLEASE DO.
WE WILL DISCUSS THE MEMORIAL SERVICE WITH YOU AT A LATER DATE,
SO FOR TODAY ...
AOKI-SAMA.
WH—
WHAT WAS THAT FOR? YOU'RE
AREN'T YOU THE SON OF
(ramble)
(ramble)
What was that all about?

Scratch
...SO—
SORRY.
Silence
.....
SORRY FOR BUTTING IN LIKE THAT.
BUT THE WAY SHE WAS TALKING TO YOU, I..
Scratch
Scratch
Pfft
...RAY?
JUMP
!?
AHA HA HA HA HA!!
Hoh!
WHAT?! RAY?!
I GIVE UP!
WHAT'RE YOU LAUGHIN'
I LOSE!
AHA HA!
AHA HA! THAT'S IT, I'M DONE FOR!
I'M JUST NO MATCH FOR YOU, SHIN-CHAN.

AND IN SPITE OF MYSELF, I WAS SPELLBOUND...



YEP, THAT'S RIGHT.
OF COURSE, THAT'S WHAT I LEARNED GROWING UP OVER THERE.
AND ACCORDING TO THEM, THAT MEANT ...
CHRISTIANITY, RIGHT?
Are you makin' fun of me? >:(
IS A SIN.
THAT MY LOVING YOU...
AN ISSUE OF WHETHER YOU CAN ACCEPT YOURSELF.
THAT IS YOUR ISSUE, R.Y.
A serious man right there.
HUH?
I BEAT MYSELF UP OVER IT, AND I FINALLY TALKED IT OVER WITH MY FATHER.
AND WELL, IT WAS AT THE HEIGHT OF ADOLESCENCE.
Hadn't thought of it.
YOU MEAN HOMO-SEXUALITY.
...OH
Speaking of which...

SO...
IT WAS BY MY OWN WILL THAT I WENT TO THE TEMPLE.
THEN YOU MAY BE ABLE TO ACCEPT YOUR-SELF..
DO YOU WANT TO TRY GOING UP THE MOUNTAIN TO THE TEMPLE ONCE?
EMPTY YOURSELF, SETTLE YOUR HEART, AND IF YOU STILL CANNOT FORGET HIM...
SO THEN IN THE END.. HOW'D IT TURN OUT?
HMM..
HUH?
I DON'T REALLY GET THAT STUFF ABOUT ACCEPTING OR NOT ACCEPTING OR WHAT-EVER...
BUT YOU... AND ME...
...OKAY, SHIN-CHAN DO YOU KNOW WHAT THE FIVE PRECEPTS ARE?
?
WHAT THE HELL'S THAT?
THEY'RE THE RELIGIOUS PRECEPTS OF THE LAITY.
"DO NOT KILL. DO NOT STEAL."
"DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY. DO NOT DRINK. DO NOT LIE."
...OKAY?

NOWHERE IN THERE WAS A SINGLE WORD ABOUT MY FEELINGS BEING A SIN
AND ON TOP OF THAT, I LEARNED THAT I COULDN'T LIE TO MYSELF,
AND I FELT SOMEHOW LIKE I HAD BEEN FORGIVEN
AND I FELL IN LOVE WITH THIS COUNTRY.
HEY, SHIN-CHAN
YOU LOVE MY HAIR AND EYES, DON'T YOU?
That's why I grew it out!
SHOCK
UH—
NO, UH— DAMN IT...
Likes the pretty ones.
SO I'M ALSO GRATEFUL TO THE COUNTRY I WAS BORN IN THAT GAVE THEM TO ME.
THANKS TO YOU, SHIN-CHAN, I CAN LOVE BOTH COUNTRIES

YOU'RE EVERYTHING TO ME NOW, SHIN-CHAN.
Blush
Just what you'd expect of someone who lived abroad for eight years.
THAT'S RIGHT.
BACK THEN AND NOW...
I'M SORRY FOR TEASING YOU TWO WEEKS AGO.
I COULDN'T HELP THINKING, "HE DOESN'T EVEN KNOW HOW I FEEL!" AND I JUST
Come on.
Ahhh
THERE WAS NO HELPING IT.
I'M INSENSITIVE LIKE THAT.
TAP
SO I'LL STAY WITH YOU FROM NOW ON,
AND I'LL PROTECT YOU, EVEN IF YOU HATE IT.
AND FOR-EVER, I'M SURE ...
...I'M SAYING THAT THE BUDDHA AIN'T TOO BAD, EITHER.

SO DON'T WORRY AND JUST STAY IN LOVE WITH ME!

YOU ARE MY SUN.

He's guilty I tell you, guilty!
That's what you'd call a crime of conscience right?
He used to get all upset if you ever even laid a finger on Shin
But the Prince has changed, hasn't he? He used to hold himself apart from us.

Zanbei, Koibito

tentatively Lovers

Sonnet 18 Kalendar

Translation Database

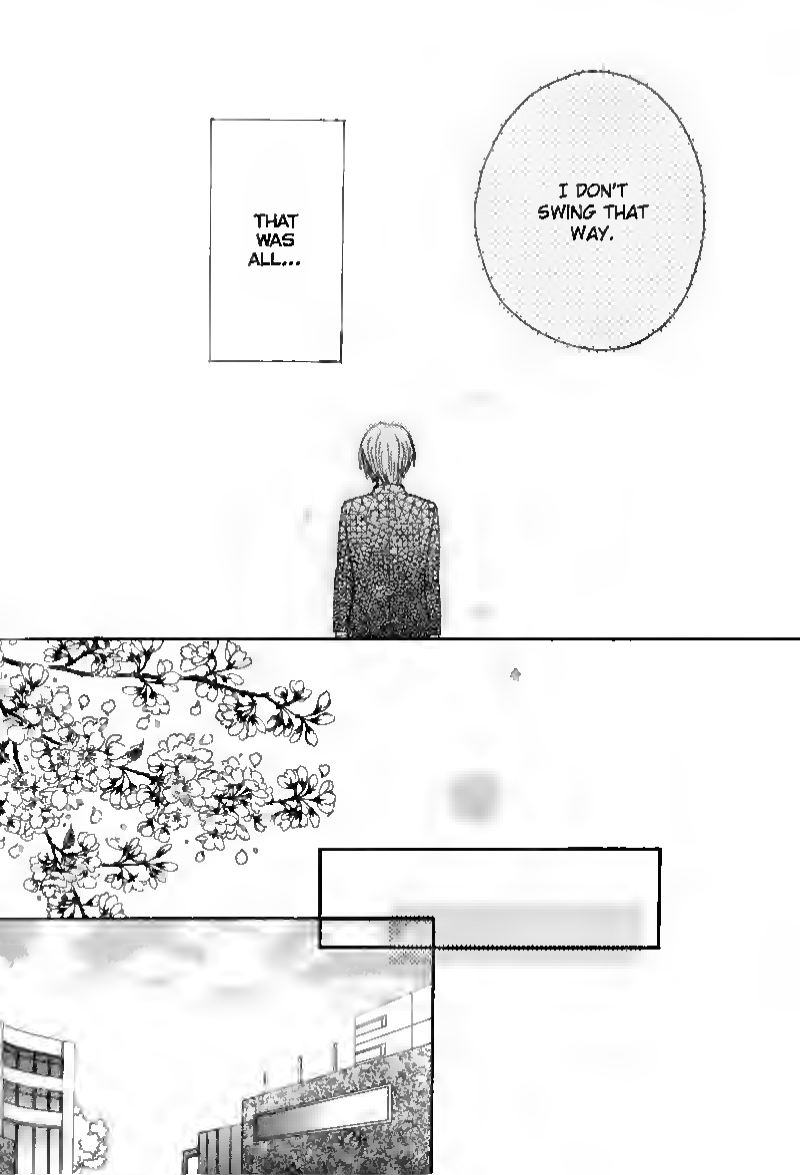
Edition of 2154

www.translatayshone

The Obstinate Coward

21st Annual Commencement Ceremony
THE HIGH SCHOOL I WENT TO WAS AN ALL-BOYS COMBINED JUNIOR HIGH AND HIGH SCHOOL.
WE'LL BE SO LONELY NOW THAT YOU'VE GRADUATED, AOKI-SAN!!
WAAAH
WAAAH
WE'LL REMEMBER ALL OF THE LEGENDS ABOUT YOU!!
WE WILL!
AOKI-SAN!!
UH—
I...
SO THIS KIND OF THING HAPPENING AT GRADUATION WASN'T EXACTLY UNUSUAL.
...WHO ARE YOU, AGAIN?
I—I'M EGAWA FROM YEAR 2!

I..!
I'VE ALWAYS LIKED YOU..
THOSE BIG GLASSES AND LANKY BODY...
...OH!
NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT, I'VE SEEN HIM IN CLASS COUNCIL MEETINGS.
AND..
BUT.
HOW-EVER.
...AH...
JUST THAT ...
YEAH.
SORRY.


I DON'T SWING THAT WAY.
THAT WAS ALL...

Indoor Soccer Club "Runners"
Recruiting new members!
chatter
chatter
IT'S 'CAUSE YOU'RE ALWAYS INVITING GIRLS, AOKI!!
UGH, WHY AREN'T WE GETTING ANY GUYS?
Freshmen wanted!
Indoor Soccer Club "Runners" Have fun!
BAM
...WHOA!
HEY, TANIYAMA, HOW MANY GUYS DO WE HAVE SO FAR?
STILL ONLY TWO!
IT'S REALLY NOT ENOUGH!
Indoor Soccer Club
YES, YES
Don't smear my good name...
COME ON, HOT-SHOT CAPTAIN AOKI, USE THAT GLIB TONGUE OF YOURS TO SWEET-TALK SOME BOYS IN!
glance
glance

MY BAD!
YOU OKAY?
OH, NO, I'M SORRY
HUH?
HUH?
THAT WAS ALL....
IT WAS SUP-POSED TO BE ...
AOKI-SAN?
... YOU'RE

...EGAWA...?
Karaoke
I'M EGAWA MITSURU IN THE LAW DEPARTMENT.
NICE TO MEET YOU ALL!
WAOO!
THIS IS GREAT! A NICE FRESHMAN! GOOD JOB CAPTAIN!
HUH? WHAT. HE YOUR HIGH SCHOOL UNDERCLASSMAN, AOKI-KUN?
WELL, WE WERE JUST ACQUAINTANCES FROM CLASS COUNCIL...
RIGHT?
...THAT'S RIGHT.
BUT I HAD A COLLEGE DEBUT, SO AOKI-SAN DIDN'T KNOW IT WAS ME FOR A MOMENT.
...HUH?
That easily.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "COLLEGE DEBUT?"
CHANGE YOUR IMAGE OR SOMETHING?
YES. I HAD GLASSES THIS BIG,
AND I WORKED IN THE LIBRARY AND STUFF.
REALLY?

SO YOU REALLY CHANGED, HUH?
HOW ABOUT IT, AOKI?
WELL, I DON'T KNOW ABOUT CHANGING ...
BLUNT
OR SHOULD I SAY, I DON'T REALLY REMEMBER WHAT HE LOOKED LIKE IN HIGH SCHOOL...
I DON'T SWING THAT WAY.
YOU'RE ALREADY REGRETTING JOINING THIS CLUB, AREN'T YOU, EGAWA?
Ugh!
YOU'RE THE WORST!
HAIL OF ABUSE
YOU'RE SO MEAN!!
I FIGURED IT WAS AN EXAMPLE OF THE FLEETING SICKNESS PARTICULAR TO ALL-BOYS SCHOOLS, AND BRUSHED IT OFF LIGHTLY, AND IN RESPONSE...
HE...
...THAT'S RIGHT. THERE'S ONLY ONE SECOND THAT REMAINS CRYSTAL CLEAR IN MY MIND.

LOOKED LIKE HE WAS ABOUT TO CRY...
FOR SOME REASON, I COULDN'T FORGET ABOUT IT...
munch
MUST'VE SEEN WRONG.
I MEAN, HE'S NOT PAYING ATTENTION TO ME AT ALL...
chuckle
Come on!
I MEAN, SERIOUSLY, COLLEGE DEBUT?
Hmph
EGAWA
YOU JUST GOT OUT OF AN ALL-BOYS SCHOOL, HOW'RE YOU TALKING TO GIRLS SO EASILY?
YES?
You used to be so plain!

COME ON, I WANNA SEE YOU WAVER.
HUH? WHAT?
"STUFF THAT HAPPENS AT ALL-BOYS SCHOOLS?"
YOU'VE GOTTA HAVE SOME JUICY STUFF ON WHAT HAPPENS AT ALL-BOYS SCHOOLS, RIGHT?
Grin
COME ON, SPIT IT OUT.
SMILE
Aw, how cute!
DON'T PRETEND IT NEVER HAPPENED!!
SPIT
YES, INDEED THERE ARE ALUMS WHO LEAVE BEHIND A LOT OF LEGENDS ABOUT THEIR EXPLOITS
FOR EXAMPLE ONE PERSON WE'LL CALL A-SAN
HUH?

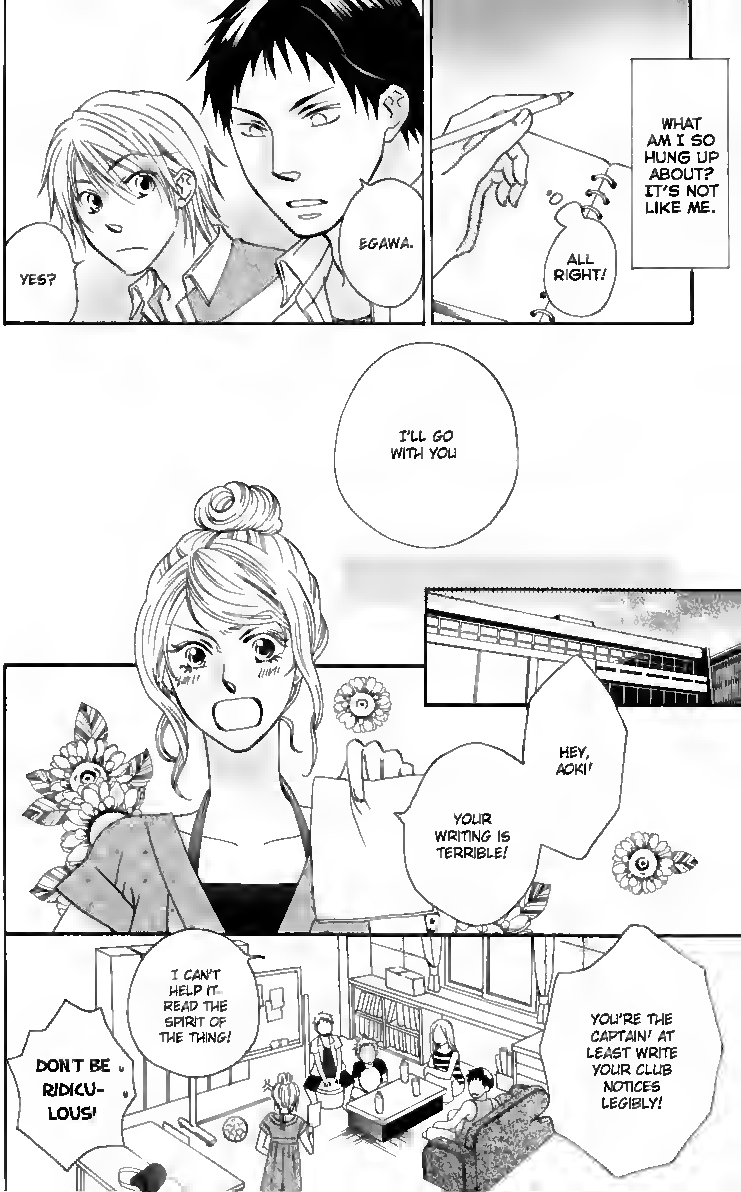
OH, AND THERE'S ALSO AN URBAN MYTH THAT HE'S THE ONE WHO HIGHLIGHTED EVERY SEXUAL WORD IN EVERY DICTIONARY IN THE LIBRARY...
OR THE TIME AT THE SCHOOL FAIR, WHEN HE PRETENDED TO BE AN ALUM AT A LECTURE AND READ THE ANNALS OF A FORMER PORN STAR...
OR HOW HE TRIED TO SNEAK INTO THE GIRL'S SCHOOL NEXT DOOR DRESSED IN WOMEN'S CLOTHING.
* Of course, he was reported.
FOR EXAMPLE, HE WAS DISCOVERED IN THE NURSE'S OFFICE TAKING ADVANTAGE OF A FEMALE COLLEGE STUDENT WHO WAS THERE AS A TEACHER-IN-TRAINING.
* After the fact, so he insisted that he hadn't done it.
Aahhh!
* They're still there.
* She had a gender-neutral name, so he tricked them when applying.
Just reading them o&p
It's painful to see you back him up like that, Egawa.
OH, BUT AT AN ALL-BOYS SCHOOL, YOU'RE TREATED LIKE A HERO FOR THAT...
NO, REALLY
Amazing!
Wow!
YOU WOULD'VE BEEN TREATED LIKE A PERVERT AT A CO-ED SCHOOL...
You're awful!
WERE YOU THAT MUCH OF A BEAST IN HIGH SCHOOL?
You're terrible, Aoki...
Though I think he probably marked up the dictionaries then.
WHEN THERE WERE PEOPLE CLAMORING IN THE LIBRARY, HE JUST CASUALLY TOOK ME OUTSIDE,
AND TURNED WITH A FLASH OF A SMILE, AND SAID,
Hiding in the corner...
HOW immature are you?!
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO HAD THE REAL COLLEGE DEBUT, DON'T YOU THINK?

SORRY 'BOUT THAT!
...HE SAID,
AND THAT WAS A SIDE OF HIM THAT I JUST COULDN'T HATE.
...I ADMIRED HIM.
...YEAH.
THAT'S A GREAT UNDER-CLASSMAN YOU'VE GOT THERE.
Whisper
...THE PLAIN, REAL EGAWA SAID THAT SO ALOOFLY.
I GUESS SO.
IT DIDN'T MATCH UP WITH HOW HE WAS AT GRADUATION.
I SUPPOSE IT REALLY WAS JUST A TEMPORARY SICKNESS.
See you later!
Bye-bye!
See you tomorrow!

NOW THERE ARE JUST AS MANY GIRLS AROUND AS THERE ARE GUYS.
I GUESS I'M THE ONE STAIN IN HIS LIFE NOW, HUH.
HMPH.
THAT KIND OF PISSES ME OFF.
OH!
YOU'RE IN THIS LECTURE TOO, AOKI-SAN?
EGAWA.
WHY DON'T YOU SIT NEXT TO ME? THERE AREN'T ANY SPACES LEFT IN THE BACK, ANYWAY.

Though I feel a bit awkward
HE'S COMPLETELY UNDAUNTED.
HEY!
GO AHEAD.
...OKAY
IF YOU DON'T MIND
whisper
HE'S SO COOL!
HM? HE'S IN MY CLUB AN UPPER-CLASSMAN.
whisper
WHO'S THAT, EGA-CHAN?
OHH? FIRST THING YOU DO ONCE YOU'RE OUT OF THE HOUSE IS GET FEMALE FRIENDS, IS IT?
HMMM.
...YOU HEARD THEM
mutt
YEAH, WELL, YOU KNOW.
I'M POPULAR WITH THE GIRLS *AND THE GUYS.*

YOU WERE LIKE THAT IN HIGH SCHOOL, AOKI-SAN.
I KNOW, RIGHT?
-heh, heh
grr
UH... WOULD YOU?
THANKS
I'M GOING TO PICK UP SOME STUFF FIRST, THOUGH. ANYTHING YOU WANT ME TO BUY YOU?
THAT'S RIGHT! I'M FREE NEXT PERIOD, SO I'M HEADING TO THE CLUBROOM.
HUH?
Grr?
...THAT'S RIGHT. AS AN UNDERCLASS-MAN, HE'S A GREAT GUY.
grin
OH, DON'T MENTION IT!


YES?
EGAWA.
ALL RIGHT!
WHAT AM I SO HUNG UP ABOUT? IT'S NOT LIKE ME.
I'LL GO WITH YOU.
HEY, AOKI!
YOUR WRITING IS TERRIBLE!
I CAN'T HELP IT. READ THE SPIRIT OF THE THING!
DON'T BE RIDICU-LOUS!
YOU'RE THE CAPTAIN! AT LEAST WRITE YOUR CLUB NOTICES LEGIBLY!

PERFECT SCORE!
THIS ISN'T SUPPOSED TO BE A QUIZ!
WE'LL BE DISCUSSING WHAT WE'RE DOING FOR THE SCHOOL FAIR.
ALL MEMBERS MUST ATTEND FRIDAY'S MEETING.
AGAIN?
TRANS-LATE THIS, EGAWA!
I give up!
The guy who wrote it is right there!
FWIP
THANK GOD EGAWA JOINED OUR CLUB, HONESTLY...
Sfarc
HUH?
...YEAH
...I SUPPOSE YOU'RE RIGHT.
THAT'S AMAZING, EGAWA.
IS IT TRUE THAT YOU BORROW AOKI'S NOTES?
AOKI-SAN AND I ARE SPLITTING THE NOTE-TAKING.
I CAN READ HIS WRITING PERFECTLY NOW
Hoh

YOU TWO GUYS HAVE IT REALLY NICE.
YOU'RE ALWAYS OFF HAVING FUN TOGETHER
YOU HAVEN'T GOTTEN A NEW GIRLFRIEND LATELY EITHER, HAVE YOU?
I can't believe you!
SHUT UP.
nudge nudge
DON'T TALK ABOUT ME LIKE I'M AN ANIMAL.
Aha ha ha
EGAWA!
YES!
gasp
squeeze

SORRY, TANIYAMA, YOU'RE NOT INVITED
TODAY I...
THEN CAN I COME WITH?
Ah!
YOU'RE SLOW AT PICKING, AND WE'VE GOT CLASS AGAIN AT 4:00
WHY?!
REALLY? THANKS!
I FOUND A PLACE THAT SELLS THAT BRAND FOR CHEAP. LET'S HEAD THERE ONCE WE'RE DONE
YOU KNOW THOSE SHOES YOU'VE BEEN FUSSING ABOUT?
...!
WAS THAT REALLY OKAY?
WITH TANIYAMA-SAN, I MEAN
Clank
Clank
1

SHE'S NOT TOO BAD, DON'T YOU THINK?
...IT'D BE A PAIN TO BE WITH SOMEONE ELSE IN THE CLUB
...SHE LIKES YOU, AOKI-SAN.
WELL, LEAVING HER BEHIND.
WHAT ABOUT IT?
clank
clank
clank
I
AND TO BE FRANK ABOUT IT, I PREFER BEING WITH YOU
Easier that way
YOU'VE REALLY MATURED, AOKI-SAN.
.....
WELL, I'M HONORED

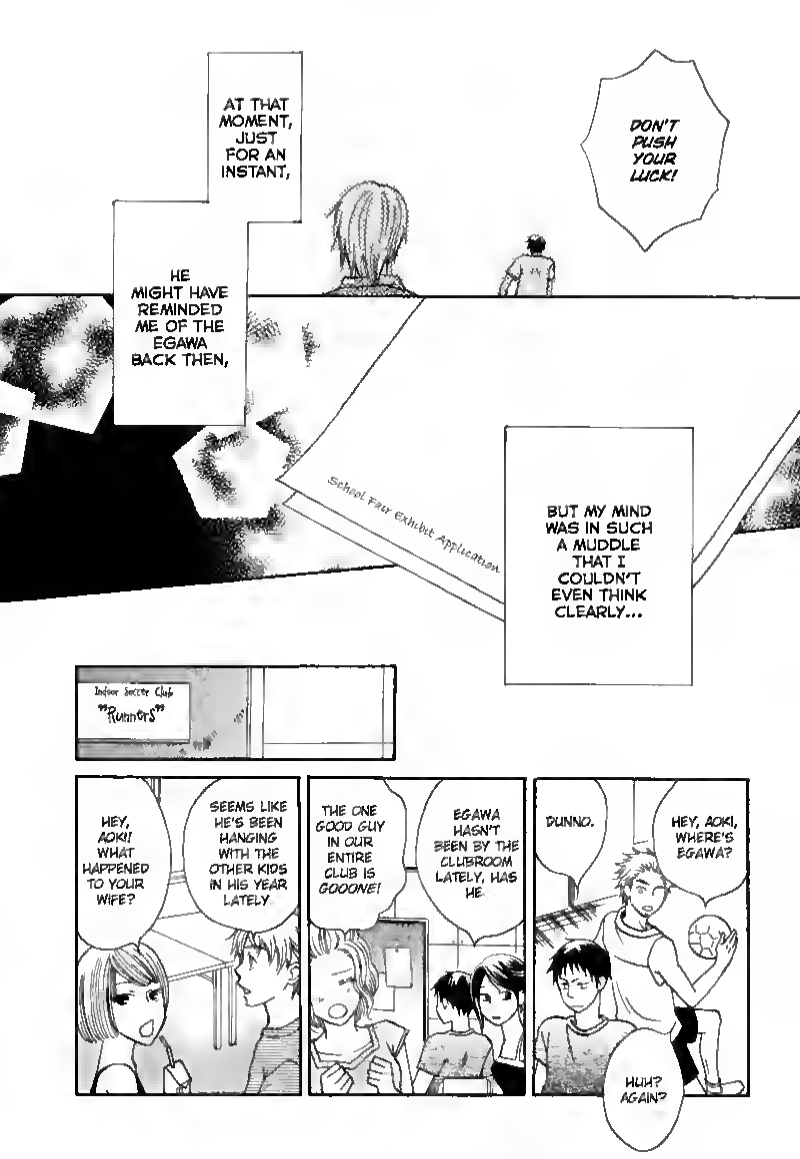
FROM THEN ON, EGAWA CONTINUED TO BE "THE GOOD UNDER-CLASSMAN,"
AND I STARTED ACTING LIKE THIS SOMETIMES TO MAKE SURE OF IT.
IT'S YOUR FAULT!
AOKI-SAN
EVERY TIME HE IGNORES IT, I'M RELIEVED ...
AND YET, AT THE SAME TIME...
THERE ARE SOME OPEN SEATS LET'S SIT DOWN.
FOR SOME REASON, I GET SO FRUSTRATED I CAN HARDLY BEAR IT.
DAMN IT!
WHY'S HE SO COOL-HEADED?!
AGGH... SHIT.

THINGS WOULD BE SO MUCH EASIER IF HE WERE A GIRL...
...WAIT, WHAT—
WHAT DID I JUST THINK?!
NO, THAT'S NOT— I'M NOT!
I WAS PERFECTLY NORMAL EVEN WHEN I WAS STUCK WITH BOYS FOR SIX YEARS,
AND IT'S NOT LIKE HE'S ANY-THING.
IT'S BE-CAUSE HE CAME UP AND SPOKE TO ME.
THAT'S RIGHT.

HE...
...AOKI-SAN?
HM?
YOU'RE KIND OF SPACING OUT. ARE YOU OKAY?
IS THIS THE APPLICATION FOR THE SCHOOL FAIR?
EGAWA.
YES?
Who's messy writing.
IT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE YOU DO.
withdraw
DO YOU HAVE A FEVER?
touch

DO YOU STILL LIKE GUYS?
...WHY DO YOU ASK?
rustle
DON'T WORRY. I HAD MY COLLEGE DEBUT.
Grin
OH, I SEE!
I JUST SUDDENLY REMEMBERED. I JUST DON'T WANT ISSUES, YOU KNOW.
NO REASON

REALLY? A HUNDRED PERCENT?
IT'S ALL RIGHT ALREADY
WHAT ARE YOU SO AFRAID OF?
flush
...I'M NOT AFRAID!
I'M JUST BEING ON MY GUARD!
BAM
WITHOUT ANY PROOF,
twip
I CAN'T TRUST YOU NEAR ME!


AT THAT MOMENT, JUST FOR AN INSTANT,
HE MIGHT HAVE REMINDED ME OF THE EGAWA BACK THEN,
DON'T PUSH YOUR LUCK!
School Fair Exhibit Application
BUT MY MIND WAS IN SUCH A MUDDLE THAT I COULDN'T EVEN THINK CLEARLY...
Indoor Soccer Club
"Runners"
HEY, AOKI! WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR WIFE?
SEEMS LIKE HE'S BEEN HANGING WITH THE OTHER KIDS IN HIS YEAR LATELY
THE ONE GOOD GUY IN OUR ENTIRE CLUB IS GOOONE!
EGAWA HASN'T BEEN BY THE CLUBROOM LATELY, HAS HE
DUNNO.
HEY, AOKI, WHERE'S EGAWA?
HUH? AGAIN?

OKAY, SO I WENT A BIT TOO FAR.
BUT IF HE'S GOT NOTHING TO FEEL GUILTY ABOUT, THEN HE SHOULD JUST COME BACK!
tug
TCH!
DUNNO!
...WAIT. "SOMETHING TO FEEL GUILTY ABOUT?"
bump
DOES THAT MEAN THAT HE STILL...
LIKES ME?
OH, EGAWA?
HE'S PROBABLY GOTTEN HIMSELF A GIRLFRIEND.
THUD
WHAAAT?!
REALLY?! HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT, TANIYAMA?!
I SEE HIM A LOT WITH A GIRL IN HIS CLASS, YOU KNOW.
IT'S PROBABLY

THEY SAID WE HADN'T APPLIED FOR SPACE FOR OUR EXHIBITION
GUYS, WE'VE GOT A BIG PROBLEM HERE!
BANG
HEY, AOKI! WHAT'RE YOU DOING?!
HIS GIRL-FRIEND, DON'T YOU THI...
HURRY UP AND PICK UP YOUR SHOES!
AOKI, WHAT HAPPENED TO THE APPLICATION FOR THE SCHOOL FAIR?
WHAT'S WRONG?
THE ORGANIZATION COMMITTEE JUST CONTACTED ME.

WHAT'RE YOU HERE FOR?
SO IS IT TRUE THAT YOU FORGOT TO TURN IN THE APPLICATION?
NO, I HEARD THAT YOU WERE TAKING RESPONSIBILITY AND FIXING THE PROBLEM YOURSELF.
WELL, IF I CAN JUST CLEAN THIS CLASSROOM AND MAKE IT USEABLE, THEN WE'LL BE ABLE TO PULL SOMETHING OFF!!
SO THEN WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?!
SHE TOLD ME IN NO UNCERTAIN TERMS THAT I WAS NOT TO HELP YOU.
TANIYAMA-SAN WAS REALLY UPSET.
...OH. THANKS.
tug
Here.
I THOUGHT I COULD AT LEAST BRING YOU A SNACK.

flip
I THOUGHT YOU WERE JUST GAY, BUT YOU MIGHT BE ALL RIGHT AFTER...
WHAT, COME TO SHOW OFF NOW THAT YOU'VE GOT YOURSELF A GIRLFRIEND?
...YOU.
YOU JACKASS! WHAT WAS THAT FOR?!
JUST WHAT EXACTLY DO YOU WANT ME TO DO?!

I THOUGHT THAT I COULD AT LEAST STAY WITH YOU IF I WERE ONLY YOUR UNDER-CLASSMAN...
SO I ACTED LIKE IT WAS NOTHING, DIDN'T I? I TRIED SO HARD!
I EVEN CHANGED THE WAY I LOOK SO I WOULDN'T LOOK OUT OF PLACE NEXT TO YOU...
AHH...
!
OH, YES, THAT'S RIGHT! TOO BAD, I DON'T HAVE A GIRL-FRIEND!
BECAUSE I'M GAY!
I'M SO SORRY!
THAT'S THE FACE.
BUT SOMETIMES YOU'D SAY SOMETHING SUGGES-TIVE,
AND WHEN YOU PUT ME AHEAD OF GIRLS, I WAS SO THRILLED INSIDE.
...HEY, AOKI-SAN...
FROM BACK THEN...
IS IT REALLY THAT MUCH FUN TO HURT ME...?!

HUFF
HUFF
...!
HUH?
YOU'VE BEEN HAVING A BLAST WITH THE LADIES EVER SINCE YOU STARTED COLLEGE, HAVEN'T YOU?!
I CAN'T HELP IT!
IN HIGH SCHOOL, IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE SOMETHING YOU GET OVER, LIKE THE MEASLES OR SOMETHING, BUT YOU WERE SO INSISTENT!
BUT NOW YOU'RE ALWAYS SURROUNDED BY GIRLS!
WELL, SO MUCH FOR ME NOW, RIGHT?! OF COURSE I'M GONNA FREAK OUT!!
WHAT? YOU'RE BEING AWFUL!
TREATING MY FEELINGS LIKE SOME KIND OF DELUSION...
AND THE WAY YOU'RE TALKING, IT'S ALMOST LIKE...

YOU'RE SAYING THAT..
YOU'RE IN LOVE WITH ME NOW, AOKI-SAN.
...TO TELL THE TRUTH,
.....
...WHAT ABOUT YOU?
YOU WERE JUST TALKING LIKE YOU'VE STILL GOT A CRUSH ON ME.
HUH?!
YOU'RE SAYING STUFF LIKE THAT AGAIN, NOW, AFTER ALL THIS?!
THAT MOMENT HAS BEEN THERE IN THE CORNER OF MY MIND EVER SINCE GRADUATION.

Ahh, I give up
YOU'RE REALLY QUITE THE COWARD.
IN HIGH SCHOOL, I NEVER EVEN IMAGINED THAT YOU HAD A SIDE LIKE THAT.
You exploded!
Sigh...
...WELL, SORRY
hmm
I EVEN THINK ...
chuckle
DON'T UNDERESTIMATE ME TOO MUCH, NOW
WHY DO YOU THINK I CAME TO THIS SCHOOL?
THAT THE MATCH MAY HAVE BEEN DECIDED SINCE THAT VERY DAY.

Chara COMICS

暫定、恋人

秋葉東子

徳間書店

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徳間書店
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CHARA COMICS

クールなヤリ手営業マン・倉橋の恋人は、頭のキレるバツイチ上司の坂本課長。クセ者でガサツな課長の"可愛い顔"を知っているのは倉橋だけ——。ところが、なりゆきで共にした一夜以来、課長はその顔をなかなか見せてくれなくて…!? 上司と部下のプライドを賭けた、仕事と恋の攻防戦♥

秋葉東子

徳間書店

TOKYO AKIRA PRESENTS

Zantei, Koibito Extra

Do I have to be adorable?

Clink
CHEERS!!
TO SECTION 3, FOR GETTING TOP SALES LAST TERM!
AHH, FINALLY, WE'VE ACHIEVED THE DREAM OF BEING TOP IN THE OFFICE!
AND THE NEW HIRE HERE HAS FINALLY GOTTEN TO THE POINT WHERE HE CAN HAUL HIS OWN WEIGHT, TOO
AHA! WELL, EXCUSE ME FOR HOLDING YOU ALL BACK
IT'S BECAUSE OF THE RIDICULOUS THINGS SAKAMOTO-SAN MAKES US DO... THERE WERE TIMES I THOUGHT IT WOULD KILL ME!

WHOA— MANAGER, YOU'RE STARTING WITH WINE BY THE CUP?
WINE GETS YOU TIPSY FAST, SO MAYBE YOU SHOULD SLOW DOWN A—
SHUT UP!
GLUG
GLUG
YOU KNOW, I MAY BE THE MANAGER OF OUR SECTION, BUT I DON'T HAVE MANY PEOPLE TO WORK WITH
I WORKED MYSELF JUST AS HARD AS I WORKED YOU GUYS!
THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I GOT TOP IN THE OFFICE SINCE I BECAME MANAGER!
sigh
TODAY, I'M DRINKING!
WHAT?
YEAH. HE'LL DO IT AGAIN FIRST TIME IN AGES
gulp
TSUJI-SAN, YOU SHOULD PREPARE YOURSELF.

Oh
I GUESS IT'LL BE THE FIRST TIME SINCE YOU JOINED UP.
YOU SEE, WHEN SAKAMOTO-SAN DRINKS A LOT, HE TURNS INTO..
A KISSING MONSTER.
SMOOCH
I suppose you could call him a gentlemen for not going for the ladies, but he's awful!
...!
YOU!!
EEP!
TWIP
WHO'S MY NEXT CUTIE PIE?
Ha
I'M PRETTY ON MY GAME NOW!
What indignity
Ha
It's sexual harassment I tell you
PLEASE... PLEASE LET ME GO...
I...
The ladies are already completely used to it

I'VE NEVER EVEN HAD A GIRL-FRIEND!!
Ah, sorry, sorry. I will. It can't be helped. You're only 22, huh?
An unexpected coming out!
Somehow escaped until now
grab
I THINK THAT'S ENOUGH FOR.
MANAGER.
A sound effect you would not expect to find in a BL love scene.
SUCK
OH. HE'S USING TONGUE, ISN'T HE
AHH.
OH, SO THAT'S HOW FAR IT'S PRO-GRESSED
POOR KURAHASHI-KUN.
The ladies are ice-cold

HEATING UP
v...!!
SO IT SEEMS
OH, MY. NOW THE LOWER GUMS.
...!
LEAN
INDEED
OH, TO THE UPPER JAW.
BYE, KURA-HASH!!
I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL. BUT DON'T DUMP THE MANAGER IN THE DITCH, NOW!
...HONE-STLY.
I KNOW THAT YOU WEREN'T ACTUALLY THAT DRUNK TODAY, MANAGER.
...WHAT. YOU KNEW?
blink
...GOOD-BYE!
SEE YA!

...WHEN YOU GET DRUNK,
YOU ACT MUCH MORE ADORABLE TH N USUAL.
Bwa ha ha
I'M SURPRISED YOU COULD TELL I WAS FAKING IT.
WELL, I WAS HAPPY ABOUT GETTING TOP IN THE OFFICE, YOU KNOW.
I JUST WANTED TO PLANT YOU A BIG WET ONE.
...KURAHASHI, ARE YOU DRUNK?
...I'M NOT SURE.
THOUGH I DIDN'T DRINK ANYTHING BUT OOLONG TEA HIGHBALLS...

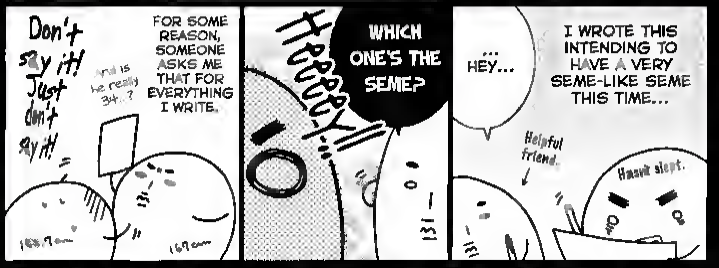
T/N: A pun on the JA game "Ore no Shita de Asoke" or "Writhe Beneath Me."

Afterword Beneath me!*

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR PICKING UP THIS BOOK!

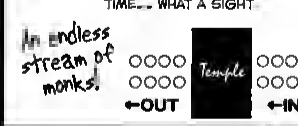
HELLO! THIS IS AKIBA TOUKO, YOUR FRIENDLY NEIGHBORHOOD NUISANCE.

Handle with care. Flammable Do not trample


Don't say it! Just don't say it!
FOR SOME REASON, SOMEONE ASKS ME THAT FOR EVERYTHING I WRITE.
WHICH ONE'S THE SEME?
... HEY...
I WROTE THIS INTENDING TO HAVE A VERY SEME-LIKE SEME THIS TIME...
Helpful friend.
Hasui slept.

I WAS TALKING TO A TEENAGE GIRL THE OTHER DAY, AND SHE ASKED, "WHAT'S IDO?" IT'S WHAT THE CELL PHONE COMPANY AU USED TO BE CALLED! DID YOU KNOW THAT?
IF YOU THINK ABOUT IT, EIGHT YEARS IS A PRETTY BIG GENERATION GAP.
AND FOR SOME REASON, MY EDITOR ALWAYS REFERRED TO THE SECTION MANAGER AS GENERAL MANAGER. SAKAMOTO'S GOT A HUGE PROMOTION!
Kun... the will employee

AT A REGULAR OLD TEMPLE SOMEWHERE IN THE CITY. LET'S CALL IT TEMPLE D. BEING THE HEAD TEMPLE OF SOME REGION AT A CERTAIN TIME MONKS COME ON A PILGRIMAGE THERE ALL AT ONCE. IT'S A HUGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE. SO YOU CAN SEE MONKS LINING UP TO GET IN AND MONKS LEAVING AT THE SAME TIME... WHAT A SIGHT.



"As the Buddha Says"

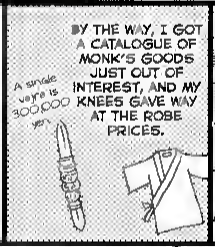
I RATHER LIKE MONKS, BUT IT SEEMS THAT'S A RATHER NICHE TASTE. I SUBMITTED A PROPOSAL FOR A STORY CALLED "BUDDHA WATCHES OVER US" SET AT A BUDDHIST SCHOOL, BUT IT WAS TURNED DOWN (REASON: WE COULD BE SUED FOR IT). TRIAL AND ERROR GAVE ME THIS. AND I HEARD A RATHER NICE STORY...

I-SAMA,
THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR TAKING CARE OF ME FOR A FULL TWO YEARS!

...WELL, THIS MANGA IS SOMETHING I DREW JUST ABOUT WHEN I WAS SWITCHING EDITORS.

BY THE WAY, I GOT A CATALOGUE OF MONK'S GOODS JUST OUT OF INTEREST, AND MY KNEES GAVE WAY AT THE ROBE PRICES.

A single robe is 300,000 yen.



That's Heaven for you?

OH, MY, WHAT A MARVELOUS SIGHT...

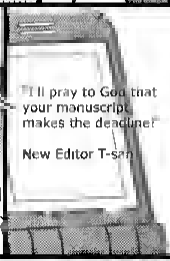
I'LL DO MY BEST!!

Reply "There is no God"

WHAT A TERRIBLE PERSON

"I'll pray to God that your manuscript makes the deadline."

New Editor T-san



I'M GOING TO WRITHE ALONG AS BEST AS I CAN WITH MY EDITOR, SO PLEASE CONTINUE TO SUPPORT ME!

SPECIAL THANKS.

-YASUHARA-SAN
-MATCHAN
-HIGUCHI-SAN
-CHINA SOCIETY
-[illegible]
-[illegible]
-[illegible]

-OSAKA-GUMI
-YUUKO-SAN
-NIKO-SAN
-MY OTHER FRIENDS
-MOM & MY CAT

AND TO YOU, FOR STICKING WITH ME UNTIL NOW!

AKIBA TOUKO'S COMICS

KAWAIKUTTE SUKOSHI BAKA
ZANTEI, KOIBITO

COVER DESIGN • 間中幸子 (coo)

TOHKO AKIBA

PROFILE

AKIBA TOUKO
BIRTHDAY: 9/6 (VIRGO)
BLOOD TYPE: B
BORN AND CURRENTLY
LIVES IN TOKYO

● THERE'S BEEN A PONZU BOOM THIS SUMMER. APPARENTLY, PONZU'S ORIGINS ARE FROM THE DUTCH "PONS," A CITRUS JUICE. HOW VERY... DEEP... AND YET NOT...